

James Howard-Johnston

Historical Writing in Byzantium

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Kieler Felix-Jacoby-Vorlesungen

Das Institut für Klassische Altertumskunde der Christian-Albrechts-Universität hat es unternommen, mit dieser Reihe an den großen Kieler Gelehrten Felix Jacoby zu erinnern. Damit kommt die CAU dem Wunsch ihrer Mitglieder nach, der großen Gelehrten dieser Universität zu gedenken, nicht zuletzt derer, die aus politischen Gründen unsere Alma Mater verlassen mussten.

Wie in den ersten drei Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts Studierende und Wissenschaftler aus verschiedenen Ländern nach Kiel kamen, um von Jacobys Gelehrsamkeit zu profitieren oder mit ihm zusammenzuarbeiten, so soll die Vorlesungsreihe, das Werk von Felix Jacoby in einem lebendigen Dialog halten, zumal er auch nach dem Kriege seine Verbundenheit mit der CAU – trotz der Erfahrungen, die er hier machen musste – bekräftigt hat. Sie soll andererseits Ausdruck des Umstandes sein, dass die akademische Welt Europas (und rund um den Globus) inzwischen wieder Züge jener *res publica lit(t)erarum* angenommen hat, die ‚aufgeklärten‘ Gelehrten immer ein besonderes Anliegen war.

Wir möchten allen Dank sagen, die das Andenken an Felix Jacoby wach gehalten haben und weiterhin wach halten, indem sie sein Lebenswerk fortsetzen – hier sei „Brill’s New Jacoby“ genannt –, seine Bedeutung als Wissenschaftler angemessen würdigen und/oder sogar unserer Aufforderung Folge leisten, an der Christiana Albertina zu Ehren Jacobys und zu unser aller Bildung zu sprechen – zu einem Thema überdies, das Jacobys Bedeutung auf den Feldern von antiker Historiographie, Epik und Poesie anerkennt.

Die Christian-Albrechts-Universität ehrt in Felix Jacoby einen großen Gelehrten, einen beeindruckenden akademischen Lehrer und einen außergewöhnlichen Menschen.

Im Namen der Herausgeber

Josef Wiesehöfer

Historical Writing in Byzantium

James Howard-Johnston

History is not a social science. Historians handle data — gathering, sorting, patterning — rather than constructing theories. They deal with a bewildering array of particulars — individuals and groups, places of every conceivable sort (from the smallest of localities to whole continents), times, actions and processes (slow- or fast-moving, gentle or violent), structures (whether the built environment in town and country or the institutions developed by human societies for the ordering of life), thoughts passing in and out of minds (only to be grasped if articulated in words), thought-worlds (the immaterial structures of minds linked together in social networks) *etc. etc.* There is no question of exactitude in history. If calculation of the effects of a single wave in the sea or of a slight breath of wind in the air is beyond the capacity of the swiftest and most capacious of computers, it is inconceivable that useful general laws of human behaviour in social aggregates can ever be formulated, when thoughts are continually bubbling to the surface in billions of minds, when gestures and actions are continually setting in motion causal chains which have no end. No, the historian is, first and foremost, a sleuth, seeking out data and clues to data, trying to understand the surrounding world. Since the present is but a moving point in time, the world which he or she explores lies in a past which stretches away to a more or less distant horizon.

Byzantium lies in the middle distance. Byzantium linked together the ancient and the early modern worlds, conserving a Late Antique political system in the medieval Islamic Middle East, never losing direct touch with its classical heritage, developing awkward, at times antagonistic, relations with the other heirs of Greco-Roman civilisation in Latin Christendom. Like its modern descendants, the Greek and Turkish republics, Byzantium should perhaps be classified as a European outsider on the margins of Europe, sharing a distant past, but subjected subsequently to a markedly different historical development. Those of us who take an

interest in that intermediate Byzantine past — a minuscule fraction of humanity, to be found in small clusters in a very few universities — do so, I suspect, chiefly because it offers us a field of historical inquiry which is both familiar and unfamiliar, to which we have fairly easy access and from which we can turn to scrutinise our European present with fresh eyes. Irrespective of that, it forms a crucial component in the history of western Eurasia and provides a useful platform from which to look out over the Mediterranean, central and eastern Europe, the Balkans, Russia and Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Islamic world. If knowledge of the past enhances our ability to operate adroitly in the present, and, at the very least, reduces irrational anxieties about other peoples, we have to track down every piece of data which is there to be found.

Data is to hand, of course, both above and below the ground, in monuments and excavated sites. The physical environment within which past scenes were played out also supplies information in abundance. So there is no substitute for travel over the terrain of the past cultures which we study, so as to grasp the realities and potentials of particular landscapes — agrarian or pastoral resource-bases, routes of commercial or strategic importance, natural strongholds and defining limits, and, highly subjective, a sense of the numinous emanating from sanctified places. But, given the imprecision of dating provided by scientific testing of materials and the dearth of physical remains which are articulate, such as coins, seals, honorific statues, funerary monuments, historical reliefs, dedications *etc.*, we rely above all on texts to supply us with historically useful, datable information.

The most valuable primary sources are documents — minutes of meetings with records of decisions reached, reports exchanged between authorities (including military dispatches from the field of action to the political centre, diplomatic reports, and instructions from the centre to subordinate agencies of the state), communiqués issued by the centre for general dissemination, legal documents of all sorts (court records, contracts, deeds of gift, charters of privilege *etc. etc.*), tax records, estate records, private correspondence, speeches, pamphlets, epigrams (in the

sense of functional verse associated with specific physical objects), and dedicatory or commemorative notices (*e.g.* honorific inscriptions).

Those are the categories of document which spring most readily to mind. But context is needed to understand them, information about the circumstances of the times when they were written, and for this, we need connected accounts of what was happening. We need a different sort of record, far less detailed than minutes, which can embrace a large swathe of time and space, which can track the actions and reactions of all manner of individuals and groups in changing circumstances. We need histories, diachronic narratives of events. Without them, reconstruction of the past is hard, demanding work, whether it be the past of western or eastern Eurasia before the advent of writing or of the Indian subcontinent in the early middle ages as well as antiquity or of most of Africa before the nineteenth century ...

I

Byzantium was heir to a classical tradition of historical writing which reached back to the fifth century B.C.¹ At its head stood Herodotus, with his boundless curiosity about the past and the heterogeneous peoples of the world he knew, and Thucydides who narrowed his focus to Greece and the long war fought by its two leading powers in the recent past. Both were concerned above all with politics at their most dramatic, when states committed themselves whole-heartedly to war. Herodotus' subject was much the larger, the apparently remorseless expansion of a great eastern power and the successful resistance of the cities of mainland Greece. Both strove to explain as well as to describe, Herodotus being more inclined to plunge into particularities, to conjure up individual characters, to present a full range of possible causes, while Thucydides homed in on what he judged to be the key factors, social and ideological, which induced tension or conflict both within and between states. Each found direct speech useful for revealing the motivations, aims and

¹ A. Kaldellis, 'The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography: A Preliminary Investigation', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 132 (2012), 71-85.

objectives of leading protagonists, but it was Thucydides who made the formal debate between opposing speakers a central feature of history. Both were able investigators. Herodotus was voracious, eager to gather as much material as he could and to lay it out before the reader. Thucydides preferred to present a sparer narrative, subjecting the evidence to rigorous scrutiny and weeding out the extraneous and unreliable. Both, finally, were writers who wished to entertain and to edify, the emphasis being rather more on entertainment (flowing anecdotes illustrating the vagaries of human nature, digressions on remote places and bizarre phenomena) in the case of Herodotus, rather more on edification in the case of Thucydides who was determined to identify underlying causes and to improve understanding of human behaviour, for the benefit of future generations. They both recast whatever they picked up from their sources and presented it in their own words, imparting a consistent literary gloss to their accounts of the past.²

Historians, like other writers, had foibles of their own, individual stylistic traits and idiosyncratic interests. A great deal of regimentation would have been required to homogenise them — as happened in early T'ang China, when the state in effect nationalised history and set up a bureaucratic structure for its production.³ In the Greek-speaking world there was much variation and development in the writing of history after its first manifestation, especially once Rome established its hegemony over the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Nonetheless certain key features were transmitted across the centuries to Late Antiquity as conventions to be followed by writers with pretensions to penning history in the traditional, grand manner. They were to write in an elevated style,

² A. Momigliano, 'The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography', in A. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), 127-42; *idem*, 'Tradition and the Classical Historian', in *idem*, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford, 1977), 161-77; *idem*, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, 1990), 29-53; C. Darbo-Peschanski, 'The Origin of Greek Historiography', in J. Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Oxford, 2007), 27-38; G. Schepens, 'History and *Historia*: Inquiry in the Greek Historians', in Marincola, *op. cit.*, 39-55.

³ D. Twitchett, *The Historian, His Readers, and the Passage of Time* (Taipei, 1997), 57-77.

and to attend above all to domestic politics — conspiracies, intrigues, appointments, dismissals, debates *etc.* — at the organising centre or centres of the state, and to warfare, whether in the interior of the empire against rebels or pretenders or on its periphery against rival powers. History also remained a branch of literature. The formal speech, on the eve of battle, say, or at other moments of crisis, had become a mandatory component. Its function was not merely to provide insight and to explain the course of events, but to embellish the narrative. A history required decorative elements, to raise it to a level well above that of the humdrum dispatches and reports written by generals and civilian officials in the course of their duties. Speeches were the most important of these decorative elements, but digressions in the manner of Herodotus were also *de rigueur*. They leavened history with antiquarian forays into the remote past (*à propos* of impressive or curious manmade objects) and with geographical and ethnographic surveys designed to satisfy the reader's appetite for the exotic and unusual.⁴

History continued to be written in this classicising manner to the very end of antiquity. In the 620s, as the last great war between Romans and Persians was reaching its climax, Theophylact Simocatta, a lawyer from Alexandria, who rose high in government service, was at work on the last in a series of four histories which, between them, cover the reigns of Justinian (527-65) and his successors down to Maurice (582-602). The style may seem at times precious and convoluted, but several of the speeches put in the mouths of his characters are well-worked pieces of persuasive rhetoric. The historical matter presented is solid and detailed, and well arranged for the most part.⁵ His three sixth-century predecessors, Procopius of Caesarea, Agathias of Myrina and Menander Protector, each had his own approach to history: Procopius was above all a reporter,

⁴ R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eusebius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1981-3), I, 10-16, 52-9, 74-7, 90-4.

⁵ M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988); S. Efthymiadis, 'A Historian and his Tragic Hero: A Literary Reading of Theophylact Simocatta's *Ecumenical History*', in R. Macrides, ed., *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2010), 169-85.

whose narrative plunged into the thick of the action; Agathias, who had a successful legal practice in Constantinople and became a notable figure in metropolitan literary circles, wrote elegant, ornate prose, kept his distance from the battlefield, and was clearly more interested in great set-piece debates than in tracing the details of campaigns; Menander, whose work only survives in passages selected for inclusion in the few extant volumes of a tenth-century historical compendium (the *Excerpta Historica*, commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus), seems to have had fewer literary pretensions, than Agathias or Simocatta, and to have been concerned above all to present concrete information to his readers.⁶

With a single exception, the works of the fourth- and fifth-century predecessors of this last series of classicising historians only survive in fragmentary form (again thanks largely to the work of Constantine Porphyrogenitus' excerptors). They were no more clones of each other than were Procopius and his continuators. Eunapius was a considerable figure in his own right, one of a number of pagan intellectuals ready to stand up in the face of the apparently remorseless advance of Christianity. He wrote fluent, supple prose, outshining his immediate successor, Olympiodorus of Thebes, likewise a stalwart pagan. Priscus of Panium, who carried on where Olympiodorus left off, was able to introduce much more first-hand experience into his history, while his successor, Malchus of Philadelphia, centred his history on a dense but lucid narrative of events, in effect a digest of military and diplomatic news.⁷ The exception is Ammianus Marcellinus from Antioch, who chose to write in Latin (presumably to reach a larger readership among the official classes). His history, much lauded in recent scholarship, has been preserved as a continuous text, although the opening, scene-setting books and the last few have been lost. He presents a wide-ranging, often vivid account of politics and

⁶ A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985) and *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970); R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool, 1985).

⁷ Blockley, *Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, I; P.J. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford, 1991), 233-7 (on Malchus).

warfare over twenty-five years (353-78), with plenty of the literary embellishment expected in a work of *classicising history*.⁸

Two other historical genres were developed as Christianity took root in the empire. It became necessary to relate Biblical history to that of the pagan world of Greece, Rome and the Middle East. This was not an easy task. The chronological parameters were fixed by the Bible. The third day of Creation, when sun, moon and stars were brought into being, marked its beginning. Somehow the remote pasts of Babylonia, Assyria and Egypt, the Trojan war, the expansion of the Achaemenid empire, the heroic feats and internecine conflicts of the Greek city-states, Alexander's conquests and the rise of Rome had to be correlated with the patriarchal and prophetic phases of Jewish history. Complex calculations were required to fit the two historical traditions together, primacy being accorded to the Biblical, since history was shaped by God's providential plan for mankind. Things became easier after the great divide of Augustus' reign, when God made a direct entry into the world of His creatures. There was also the thorny problem of the deep past of the Greeks. A place had to be found for mythical figures, equated if possible with dimly remembered dynasts.

The first attempts to write this sort of world history were made in the third and fourth centuries. The earliest work was Julius Africanus' *Chronographiai* which came down to 221, the most widely read was the *Chronicon* of Eusebius of Caesarea, written in the first half of the fourth century. Leading exponents of the tradition which they inaugurated were to be found in the great cities of the east Mediterranean — the monks Panodorus and Annianus in Alexandria at the beginning of the fifth century, John Malalas and John of Antioch in Antioch in the sixth century, the continuators of these Antiochenes and the anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale* in Constantinople in the second half of the sixth and the early seventh century. This tradition of *universal history* was to be

⁸ J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989); G. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge, 2008).

carried on by a succession of writers through the whole of the Byzantine Middle Ages.⁹

The second new genre was that of *ecclesiastical history*. It should be seen as a natural development, given the secular preoccupation of classicising history, which viewed human beings as prime agents of change, but subject to the vagaries of fortune. There was therefore a need for a historical space dedicated to the affairs of the nascent church, especially as precedent, both in the sphere of organisation and that of doctrine, was of the utmost importance. Here again Eusebius of Caesarea was a pioneer. His *Ecclesiastical History*, which recorded the early history of the church and its establishment under Constantine, inspired several continuators in the east — foremost among them Socrates, Sozomon, Theodoret, Theodore Lector, ps.Zachariah of Mitylene, John of Ephesus, Evagrius. Since their theological views diverged, individual authors resorted increasingly to polemic. They also did something quite unprecedented within the historical sphere: *they began to cite, indeed to quote, evidence* in support of their positions. If modern scholarly history, duly footnoted, has an origin, it is to be found in the tendentious works of early church historians.¹⁰ In due course, though, the segregation of secular and ecclesiastical history broke down in the face of reality where there was so much intertwining of lay and clerical issues. In contrast to Procopius who was careful to compartmentalise his history, Simocatta incorporated a fair amount of ecclesiastical matter into his, making a churchman (Dometianus, Metropolitan Bishop of Melitene) one of his leading protagonists and including several miracle stories. Thereafter ecclesiastical history melted away as an independent genre. Instead it was to be found as an important element in fully-fledged recent and contemporary histories, as well as in universal histories, which had, of course, straddled the secular and ecclesiastical worlds from the first.

⁹ E. Jeffreys, B. Croke & R. Scott, ed., *Studies in John Malalas*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 6 (Sydney, 1990); *Iulius Africanus, Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments*, ed. M. Wallraff et al., trans. W. Adler, GCS 15 (Berlin, 2007).

¹⁰ P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Louvain, 2004), 163-217.

II

We should now turn to histories written in the middle ages, after the Arabs' conquest of the Roman Middle East (Palestine, Syria, northern Mesopotamia and Egypt).¹¹ In a decade (634-43) the Romans were stripped of their empire and had to adapt to their changed status as a medium-sized power on the north-west flank of a new Arab-Muslim world-empire. Defeat administered a massive shock to the fundamental structures of the state and to its inherited imperial ideology. When the dust cleared, a leaner, highly centralised apparatus of government came into view, with a fiscal system geared to providing the resources for a guerilla war of defence and with a social order changed out of all recognition in what amounted to a quiet, slow-moving revolution. The emperor's claim to the role of divinely ordained director of earthly affairs was also shed in the course of fruitless fighting to regain lost territory in the middle and later decades of the seventh century. This Roman successor state, which we call Byzantium, quite naturally acquired a siege mentality. It still laid claim to a special relationship with higher, divine authority but as no more than a latter-day chosen people, a new Israel.¹²

Byzantium's literary culture too was radically remoulded in the seventh century. The copious and varied output of the sixth century was succeeded by one dominated by homilies and saints' lives. Poetry fell silent after a final, magnificent flourish in the hands of George of Pisidia, a wordsmith of rare ability, who wrote about the dramatic events of his lifetime in the early seventh century but sought always to imbue his poems with a strong moral message. History was more affected than other branches of literature. It too fell silent in the 640s, after it became plain

¹¹ The most notable recent contributions to the subject are: J. Burke *et al.*, ed., *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 16 (Melbourne, 2006), Macrides, *History as Literature*, A. Kaldellis, 'The Corpus of Byzantine Historiography: An Interpretive Essay', in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), 211-22, and W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013).

¹² M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (London, 1996); J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Rise of Islam and Byzantium's Response', in A. Oddy, ed., *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East* (Exeter, 2010), 1-9.

that the heroic feats of the Emperor Heraclius in driving the Persians from the Middle East and resuscitating the empire had come to naught with the outrush of Arabs from the desert.¹³ Much has been written about Byzantium in the seventh century, but it must be emphasised that for the crucial period of change, when it was forced to reorganise in order to survive, almost all indigenous sources of information give out. The most precious of the few exceptions are a dossier of documents associated with the treason and heresy trials of Pope Martin and Maximus Confessor, and accounts of two crises affecting Thessalonica included in the *Miracula* of the city's patron saint, St. Demetrius.¹⁴ Otherwise there is total radio silence from Byzantium for all but the first two years of Constans II's reign (641-69). Such signals as can be picked up from that of his son Constantine IV (669-85) are very broken, taking the form of a few notices tacked on to the start of the political memoirs of a certain Patrician Trajan, written around 720.¹⁵

An intermission of some eighty years separated the second continuator of John of Antioch, at work in the middle of the 640s, from Trajan. History appeared to have shriveled up. That may well be so (with the two exceptions noted above), if we simply attend to works written to inform a leisured readership. However, a dearth of written histories did not necessarily reflect the death or near-death of a historical mentality. For Byzantium had to draw on all its experience of the past, on its accumulated knowledge about the surrounding world, if it was to cope, as it did, with the prolonged crisis which set in from the 630s and was to last for well over two centuries. So we may surmise that history continued to be written, perhaps in greater volume than before, in the form of posi-

¹³ A. Cameron & L.I. Conrad, ed., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 25-80 (M. Whitby, 'Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality') & 81-105 (A. Cameron, 'New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature: Seventh-Eighth Centuries').

¹⁴ P. Allen & B. Neil, ed. & trans., *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002); P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius, I Le texte* (Paris, 1979).

¹⁵ J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010), 256-60, 306-7, 429-31.

tion papers dealing with different arenas of foreign policy. For Byzantine policy-planners had to take account of the particular characteristics of adversaries and allies, actual and potential, had to exploit detectable weaknesses and parry notable strengths. The multifarious pasts of neighbouring peoples had to be understood, memories of Roman dealings with them had to be recalled, if Byzantium was to profit from its greatest asset, a tradition of statecraft developed and refined over many centuries of engagement in the Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and northern worlds. It may be conjectured then that the seventh century saw greater reliance on history by the apparatus of government than ever before and more research related to current issues. The written materials which were produced were quite naturally confined to the appropriate bureaux and were not subsequently reproduced or epitomised for wider circulation.

The Patrician Trajan's memoirs have not survived, but their coverage and content may be reconstructed partially from two later texts, the *Short History*, written probably in the 780s by Nicephorus, a high-flying civil servant who was later to become Patriarch of Constantinople, and the *Chronographia* put together between 810 and 814 by Theophanes, a well-connected abbot of considerable means. Both made extensive use of Trajan's memoirs, as also of a history of the middle decades of the eighth century (likewise lost), which was well-disposed towards the government of the time and gave extensive coverage to the long war between Byzantium and Bulgaria. They were true historians, although they differed greatly in their working methods. Each looked back to an earlier historical work and extended its coverage to the present. The coup of Phocas (602) with which Theophylact Simocatta ended his history was the starting-point for Nicephorus, who, probably out of prudence, halted in 769, over a decade before the time of writing. Theophanes was continuing the universal history of an older friend and literary mentor, George Syncellus, who had got no further than the accession of Diocletian in 284. Nicephorus aimed at the higher, classicising level of historical writing, but did no substantive editorial work of his own, content merely to rephrase passages from the few sources he had collected (three all told), improving the style and inserting some mini-speeches. It was a work of his youth and does not

seem to have been finished. The restyling diminishes markedly towards the end. Theophanes was more modest in his aims. His history was a compilation rather than a composition, which was intended to complete George Syncellus' universal history. So he paid the same meticulous attention to chronology, merely changing the format in which he presented the collated results. He extracted relevant material from an impressively large collection of texts, placed it in discrete notices, and grouped the notices in carefully dated year-entries. He was much more scholarly than Nicephorus, and readier to intervene editorially to correct any detectable bias in favour of a heretical ruler.¹⁶

Nicephorus and Theophanes inaugurated a new phase of historical writing after a long hiatus. The two categories — what we might call *fuller, contemporary history* (dealing with a delimited period debouching into the present), with pretensions to classicism, on the one hand, and *historical compendia* (synoptic histories which served to orient the reader with respect to the deep, as well as recent past, with summary accounts of important events), written in a plainer but still literary style, on the other — each had a sequence of exponents in subsequent centuries. I leave to the side mere lists of rulers and notable events, like Nicephorus' collection of chronological tables which survives in more than forty manuscripts and the short chronicles edited by Peter Schreiner, mechanical productions with little connecting prose.¹⁷ To the category of fuller contemporary history belongs the lost work of Sergius Confessor, who, according to Photius (who does not let on that he was his son), wrote a history extending from the reign of Constantine V (probably beginning

¹⁶ *Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani breviarium historicum*, ed. & trans. C. Mango, CFHB 13 (Washington, D.C., 1990); *Georgii Syncelli ecloga chronographica*, ed. A.A. Mosshammer (Leipzig, 1984), trans. W. Adler & P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford, 2002); *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883-5), trans. C. Mango & R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (Oxford, 1997); Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 237-312.

¹⁷ Nicephorus, *Chronographikon Syntomon*, ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), 79-135; P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, CFHB 12, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1975-9); Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 31, 485.

in 769 where Nicephorus left off) to the eighth year of Michael II (827-8). Two substantial fragments have been preserved, the first slightly rewritten as a freestanding account of the disastrous expedition of the Emperor Nicephorus I into Bulgaria (811), the second a detailed history of the years 811-16.¹⁸ The universal history down to 843 written by George the Monk, probably in the early 870s, belonged to the second category of historical compendia. It was a highly moralistic, didactic text, into which large chunks of earlier homiletic material were inserted. But George also set out to entertain his readers with anecdotal material. He achieved great success among Byzantine monastic readers — hence the large number of manuscripts which survive.¹⁹

There was another hiatus before the next cluster of historical texts to have survived. Constantine Porphyrogenitus commissioned a continuation of Theophanes' *Chronographia* in two parts, the first running from 813 to 867 and organised by imperial reign, the second a laudatory biography of his grandfather, Basil I (867-86).²⁰ Both these works can be placed in the higher, better-written category, especially the second, which may have been modeled on a lost biography of Augustus by Nicholas of Damascus.²¹ Both also served an ulterior political purpose, that of burnishing the reputation of the so-called Macedonian dynasty, at the beginning of Constantine's personal rule (945-59). Somewhat earlier, perhaps around 930, Joseph Genesisius, a senior courtier, made use of the same collection of sources to produce his own (inferior) version on the period 813-67, to which he later added a résumé of the Life of

¹⁸ Extant fragments: I. Dujčev, 'La chronique byzantine de l'an 811', *Travaux et Mémoires*, 1 (1965), 205-54, at 210-17 (text and translation); I. Bekker, ed., *Historia de Leone Bardae Armenii filio*, CSHB 34 (Bonn, 1842), 333-62. Discussion: Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 90-100.

¹⁹ Georgius monachus, *Chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor, rev. P. Wirth, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1978); Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 114-20.

²⁰ I. Bekker, ed., *Theophanes continuatus*, CSHB 48 (Bonn, 1838), 3-211; I. Ševčenko, ed., *Chronographiae quae Theophanis continuati nomine fertur liber quo vita Basilii imperatoris amplectitur*, CFHB 42 (Berlin, 2011).

²¹ R.J.H. Jenkins, 'The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 8 (1954), 11-30, repr. in R.J.H. Jenkins, *Studies on Byzantine History of the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London, 1970), no. IV.

Basil.²² Constantine also commissioned a massive supplement to the universal history written by George Syncellus and Theophanes, which took the form of a comprehensive collection of excerpts from a wide range of classical and late antique authors, sorted by theme and arranged in fifty-three volumes.²³ Another of his commissions, the mistitled *De administrando imperio*, a handbook of diplomacy with a strong historical bias, may have been intended to act in part as a second supplement, by presenting material on the recent history of actual and potential allies and clients of Byzantium in important arenas of active diplomacy.²⁴

To the generation following Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his stable of writers belong two other high-style historians, Theodosius the Deacon who described the Byzantine conquest of Crete (960-1) in 1039 twelve-syllable lines of verse, probably soon after the end of the campaign, and Leo the Deacon who, writing at the end of the tenth century, covered the reigns of Romanus II (959-63), Nicephorus Phocas (963-9) and John Tzimiskes (969-76). Each text is remarkable in its own way. The Cretan campaign is smoothly narrated in elegant iambs, most of which have been lifted from classical texts. Leo's language is rich and reminiscent of that of the most literary sixth century historian, Agathias. He conjures up vivid scenes. His characters speak to each other in direct speech. There

²² A. Lesmüller-Werner & I. Thurn, ed., *Josephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, CFHB 14 (Berlin, 1978), trans. A. Kaldellis, *Genesisios on the Reigns of the Emperors*, Byzantina Australiensia 11 (Canberra, 1998). Kaldellis, ix-xxiv for career and date of writing.

²³ *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti*, ed. U.P. Boissevain, C. de Boor, T. Büttner-Wobst & A.G. Roos, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1903-1910); P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971), 280-8; B. Flusin, 'Les Excerpta constantiniens: Logique d'une anti-histoire', in S. Pittia, ed., *Fragments d'historiens grecs: Autour de Denys d'Halicarnasse*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 298 (Rome, 2002), 537-59.

²⁴ Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins, CFHB 1 (Washington, D.C., 1967) with Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, II Commentary, ed. R.J.H. Jenkins (London, 1962); Konstantin Bagrjanorodny, *Ob upravlenii imperiej: Tekst, perevod i kommentarij*, ed. G.G. Litavrin & A.P. Novosel'tsev (Moscow, 1989).

is a high ratio of words to content in the text as a whole. It is closer to a rhetorical performance than a normal work of Byzantine history.²⁵

A contemporary production of a very different sort was the universal history of the Logothete Symeon.²⁶ When the Logothete reached the period covered by the two parts of the *Continuation* of Theophanes (bks. i–iv and v), he produced what can best be described as an *anti-history* of the Macedonian dynasty. The tone is highly critical. Scandal of all sorts is retailed. The chief target is Constantine Porphyrogenitus' grandfather Basil I (867–86), founder of the dynasty. Everything possible is done to blacken his reputation from the moment he catches the eye of the young Michael III. Homosexual love and murder (gruesomely described) open his way to the throne. His two sons and successors, Leo VI (886–912) and Alexander (912–3), are also lambasted, along with the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus who headed the regency council appointed by Alexander (913–9). The tone only changes with the accession of a non-Macedonian to the throne, the admiral of the fleet, Romanus I Lecapenus (920–44). Instead of the vitriol poured over his Macedonian predecessors, there is sympathy and understanding. It is implicitly acknowledged that he committed a serious offence in breaking his word and seizing power, but much is made of his subsequent acts of contrition, culminating in four years of involuntary penance after his overthrow by his sons in December 944. The Logothete breaks free of his chosen regnal format so as to sketch the history of the following four years, up to Romanus' death in 948.²⁷ Given his anti-Macedonian bias, the Logothete should probably be viewed as a literary partisan of the great magnate families of Asia Minor who muscled their way to power in the 960s and continued to pose a serious threat to Basil II in the early years of his reign. There are signs that he was writing long after the reign of Romanus, perhaps, it may be conjectured, as late as the 970s or 980s when Bardas Phocas and Bardas Sclerus were lead-

²⁵ Theodosius Diaconus, *De Creta capta*, ed. H. Criscuolo (Leipzig, 1979); *Leonis Diaconi historiae*, ed. C.B. Hase, CSHB 33 (Bonn, 1828), trans. A.-M. Talbot & D.F. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, DO Studies 41 (Washington, D.C., 2005). Talbot & Sullivan, 9–31 for career, date of writing and style.

²⁶ S. Wahlgren, ed., *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon*, CFHB 44.1 (Berlin, 2006).

²⁷ *Sym.Log.*, 136.1, 6, 57–9, 83–4 & 137.1–8.

ing great rebellions.²⁸ That is the most appropriate context for a history which sets out systematically to destroy the reputation of the ruling dynasty.

Almost a century passes before the appearance of a third set of free-standing historical texts. In the interim, probably around the year 1000, two revised editions of the Logothete's history were produced. The first is preserved in a small number of manuscripts, of which the fullest is *Vat. gr. 167*. The style has been improved (a little). Supplementary material has been incorporated, highlighting the achievements of one or other of two great aristocratic families, either that of John Curcuas (in *Vat. gr. 167*)²⁹ or the Phocades in the other four manuscripts (*Vat. gr. 153 & 163*, *Holkham gr. 296* and *Vindob. gr. 40*).³⁰ Two additional extracts, both substantial, from the biography of Romanus Lecapenus used by the Logothete, have been included in *Vat. gr. 167*.³¹ Coverage has been extended over the the personal rule of Constantine (945-59) and the short reign of his son Romanus II (959-63), except in *Vat. gr. 167* where the text breaks off in 961. In marked contrast to the general tendency of Logothete's history, both Constantine and Romanus II are given a good press. The result is a bizarre amalgam of pro- and anti-Macedonian material. This is particularly true of the version in *Vat. gr. 167* which tacks the last part of the

²⁸ Sym.Log., 136.37: two eagles were said to have come together overhead during Romanus' summit meeting with the Bulgar ruler Symeon in 923, only to have flown apart in opposite directions at the end of the meeting; this was taken to presage failure of the peace agreement. The implied resumption of warfare did not occur before the late 960s. The great rebellions: C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford, 2005), 240-98.

²⁹ Theoph.Cont., 426.3-429.2 for a summary of a collective biography (i.e. family history) of John Curcuas, Romanus' great general, his brother Theophilus and Theophilus' grandson, John Tzimisces. It was written by a judge, the Protospatharios Manuel, in the reign of Nicephorus Phocas — presumably to boost the political standing of Tzimisces, at the time commanding the field army operating in the east (a phrase which has surely been simply copied by the editor of Theoph.Cont. from the family history).

³⁰ A.P. Kazhdan, 'Khronika Simeona Logofeta', *Viz. Vrem.* 15 (1959), 125-43, at 131-2; A. Markopoulos, 'Le témoignage du Vaticanus gr. 163 pour la période entre 945-963', *Symmeikta*, 3 (1979), 83-119; *idem*, 'Sur les deux versions de la chronographie de Syméon logothète', *BZ* 76 (1983), 279-84. Cf. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 211-17.

³¹ Theoph.Cont., 429.17-430.21, 438.20-440.14.

Logothete's chronicle, in this revised version, on to the two ninth-century histories commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, to form the sixth book of Theophanes Continuatus. The revised and extended text must postdate the original composition of the Logothete's history (not earlier than the 970s), with its two versions representing copies annotated by readers affiliated to one or other of the great aristocratic parties led by the Phocades and Scleri (political heirs of the Curcuas-Tzimisces family).³² A second revised edition of the Logothete's history was much more thorough-going. The author (conventionally known as ps.Symeon) had access to a good library. For the Logothete's history from Creation to 813, he substituted a work of his own, combining material from John Malalas, John of Antioch, George Syncellus, Theophanes and other sources. From 813 he made the Logothete's text the basis of his own, pruning it considerably and inserting material from several other sources, including a wonderful critique of the famous Patriarch Photius.³³

Apart from a set of pithy notices about notable episodes in the Arab conquest of Sicily and raiding of southern Italy, from 827 to 988, which survives in two eleventh-century manuscripts and was translated into Arabic,³⁴ other works written between the middle of the tenth and the middle of the eleventh century which dealt with recent and contemporary events were condemned to obsolescence because of their tendentious character. They are cited in the introduction to the most ambitious of the late eleventh century texts, the *Synopsis historion* (*Historical Conspectus*) of John Scylitzes.³⁵ Scylitzes was a successful judge who rose to the top of the judiciary, as Drungar of the Watch and Eparch of the City, in the 1090s. He set out to write a historical survey of the recent and intermediate past, reaching back almost three centuries from the time of

³² J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris, 1990), 321-33.

³³ Kazhdan, 'Khronika', 132-8; Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 217-23. Only the last part, from 813, has been published — I. Bekker, ed., *Symeon Magister*, CSHB 48 (Bonn, 1838), 601-760.

³⁴ Schreiner, *Kleinchroniken*, I, 331-40.

³⁵ *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, proem, 26-39, ed. I. Thurn, CFHB 5 (Berlin, 1973), trans. B. Flusin & J.-C. Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzès, Empereurs de Constantinople* (Paris, 2003).

writing to 811. Drawing on identifiable antecedent texts for the first century and a half to 963 (mainly *Genesius* and *Theophanes Continuatus*), he carried the story through the rest of the period covered by Leo the Deacon (but independently of Leo) and the long reign of Basil II (976-1025) down to 1057. His sources were, as he says, in the main ephemeral productions, promoting or denigrating figures of note, which he stripped of the overtly tendentious and combined into a single, reasonably coherent narrative.³⁶ His history was very much a work of its time, with a core of military episodes which illustrated the heroic qualities of aristocratic commanders. The commanders who were picked out bore names familiar from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. It looks as if Scylitzes was taking care to flatter the leading figures in the regime of Alexius Comnenus, by spotlighting the achievements of their ancestors. It is impossible to say how soon after Alexius' seizure of power he began to write, but his early halt — on the eve of Isaac Comnenus' coup in 1057 — is perhaps best explained by uncertainty on his part about the durability of Alexius' rule in his first troubled decade. Later he was able to extend his coverage in a continuation to 1079, safe in the knowledge that Alexius was unlikely to be overthrown but wary of giving any details about his route to power.³⁷

Two works with rather more historical pretension were written at roughly the same time as the main body of Scylitzes' history. Michael Psellus, a *rhetor* in the classical mode, penned a personal, brilliantly evocative history of court life and politics in the eleventh century (from 1025 to 1059), prefaced with a summary account of the reign of Basil II (976-1025). He was probably writing in the early years of the Constantine X Ducas' reign (1059-67). It was full of the inside knowledge gathered by an intellectual placeman who portrays himself as adept at gaining the confidence of emperors.³⁸ By no stretch of the imagination can it be clas-

³⁶ Scyl., proem, 40-59.

³⁷ Flusin-Cheyne, *Jean Skylitzès*, v-xxiii; Holmes, *Basil II*, 66-119, 186-216.

³⁸ É. Renauld, ed. & trans., *Michel Psellos Chronographie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1926-8); Ja.N. Ljubarskij, *Mikhail Psell, Lichnost' i tvorcestvo: K istorii vizantijskogo predgumanizma* (Moscow, 1978); E. Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiographie und Apologie*, Serta Graeca: Beiträge zur Erforschung griechischer

sified as sober history. There is none of the self-effacement of the true classicising historian, and no attempt to write a considered and balanced account. Later, during the reign of his pupil, Michael VII (1071-8), and probably at his suggestion, he brought it up to date with more tendentious accounts of the three succeeding reigns.³⁹ Michael Attaleiates, the other historian roughly contemporary with Scylitzes, was a drabber figure. He too could draw on inside knowledge, which extended to military operations in the field. He was a senior judge (like Scylitzes), whom the Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes took on two of his campaigns against the Turks, including that in 1071 which ended in defeat at Manzikert. His history may be pedestrian, compared to Psellus', but it provides much better coverage of events from the accession of Michael IV in 1034 to 1079/80. Its historical worth is also appreciably higher, save for the last section which is an undisguised *encomium* of its dedicatee, the reigning emperor, Nicephorus III Botaneiates (1078-81).⁴⁰

Before turning to the twelfth century, we should take note of a curious work, a chronicle credited in the single extant manuscript to Michael Psellus. It is an attribution which has been taken seriously, despite the unexceptionable style and simplistic subject-matter of the text. It is a history of the Roman world, from Romulus to Basil II. It takes the form of series of biographical notices, initially short, then doubling in length from ch. 55 on Constantine the Great to ch. 86 on Philippicus at the beginning of the eighth century, after which they shrink again. Towards the end, the author, like Theophanes and the Logothete, spreads himself, writing at length about the last few emperors, from Basil I to Basil II. It is a low-brow work, showing a special interest in the often far from arresting sayings of rulers. It is surely inconceivable that Psellus, a brilliant man who delighted in showing off his intelligence and linguistic virtuosity, could

Texte 20 (Wiesbaden, 2005); M. Jeffreys, 'Psellos and "His Emperors": Fact, Fiction and Genre', in Macridis, *History as Literature*, 73-91.

³⁹ Pietsch, *Michael Psellos*, 111-28.

⁴⁰ I. Pérez Martín, ed. & trans., *Miguel Atalates: Historia* (Madrid, 2002) & trans. A. Kaldellis & D. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates: The History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012); D. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Tempe, Arizona, 2012).

have written such a text, unless it were an elaborate spoof (but then we would expect to find the odd clue in the midst of deliberate dullness).⁴¹

Much history was written in the twelfth century, an age in which literary folk proliferated in Constantinople and there was considerable experimentation.⁴² Three contemporary historians were at work, together with four who ranged back to the beginning of time. One of the latter was George Cedrenus, a rough contemporary of Scylitzes, possibly to be identified with a homonym who rose high in the bureaucracy, attaining the rank of Vestarches. He combined ps.Symeon's history of the deep past (from Creation to 813) with Scylitzes' on the recent past (from 813 to 1057).⁴³ A senior judge, John Zonaras, who was responsible for an important commentary on canon law, compiled a universal history of his own, quite independent of Cedrenus' but likewise incorporating material from Scylitzes. He wove his own views into the text, in particular his high regard for the Roman Republic. He ventured into the Comnenian period, halting in 1118, again showing his independence: instead of the admiration of Alexius suffusing Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, of which he made extensive use, Zonaras was highly critical of Alexius' policies. At the time he was writing, he was a monk at the monastery of St. Glyceria, having probably lost favour some time after 1118.⁴⁴ The other two universal histories were rather shorter, one written in prose by Michael Glycas, another high-ranking civil servant with a mind of his own, who wrote a work of practical theology and fell foul of Manuel Comnenus, the other in verse by Constantine Manasses.⁴⁵ It is, however, to the other

⁴¹ W.J. Aerts, ed., *Michaelis Pselli historia syntomos*, CFHB 30 (Berlin, 1990).

⁴² P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 336-56, 394-7; M. Mullett, 'Novelisation in Byzantium: Narrative after the Revival of Fiction', in Burke, *Byzantine Narrative*, 1-28.

⁴³ I. Bekker, ed., *Georgius Cedrenus*, CSHB 13-14 (Bonn, 1838-9); Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 339-41.

⁴⁴ Text: L. Dindorf, ed., *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1868-75). Life and works: H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978), I, 416-19; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel Komnenos*, 404-6.

⁴⁵ I. Bekker, ed., *Michaelis Glycae annales*, CSHB 37 (Bonn, 1836); O. Lampsidis, ed., *Constantini Manassis breviarium chronicum*, 2 vols., CFHB 36 (Athens, 1996). Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, 256-7, 350-1, 355-6, 402, 455, 460, 471 (Manasses), 370-82, 404-6 (Glycas).

three historians, who confined themselves to the recent past, that modern historians primarily look. Their works were very different. Two covered the early part of the Comnenian age. In the *Alexiad* Anna Comnena presented a detailed and laudatory account of the reign of her father Alexius (1081-1118) in a classicising style, while the continuation covering the reigns of his two successors, John (1118-43) and Manuel (1143-80), was written in plain officialese by John Cinnamus, secretary to Manuel Comnenus. The third was an extraordinarily long-winded account in an over-ornate style of the Norman capture and sack of Thessalonica in 1185 by Eustathios Archbishop of Thessalonica.⁴⁶

With the *Alexiad* (composed in its final form between 1138 and 1153) we reach the acme of historical writing in Byzantium. With its combination of intellectual acumen, wide range of subject-matter (warfare, diplomacy, court politics, show trials *etc. etc.*), lush style and frequent classical allusions, it is a most impressive achievement. It was, however, not the work of a single hand, Anna's, talented though she was. She gave it literary shape, recasting Alexius as a latterday Odysseus. She also gave it intellectual bite. But most of its content had already been drafted by her husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, before his death in 1138. This explains the bias in coverage towards detailed campaign narratives, and an individual narrative style which is readily identifiable as his. It also helps to explain the often threadbare background provided for the events reported, in particular the gaping holes in coverage which frustrate historians of Russia and the Crusades. Nicephorus simply put off the most difficult of all the tasks he faced, that of coming to grips with the history of the Russian principalities and their battles with steppe peoples in the eleventh century and the even more complex history of the many earthly

⁴⁶ D.R. Reinsch & A. Kambylis, ed., *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, CFHB 40, 2 vols. (Berlin, 2001), trans. E.R.A. Sewter, rev. P. Frankopan, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena* (London, 2009); A. Meineke, ed., *Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, CSHB 26 (Bonn, 1836), trans. C.M. Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos* (New York, 1976); S.P. Kyriakides (ed.) & V. Rotolo (trans.), *La espugnazione di Tessalonica: Eustazio di Tessalonica* (Palermo, 1961) & trans. J.R. Melville-Jones, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 8 (Canberra, 1988).

agencies, across the whole of Europe, from Constantinople to Italy and from Italy to France, the Low Countries and north Germany, which were involved in the mobilisation of the First Crusade.⁴⁷ Before he died, however, he did polish up his draft history of the decade preceding Alexius' *coup d'état* in 1081. This was transmitted as a separate work in a single manuscript. The manuscript was lost in the seventeenth century, but a transcription had already been made.⁴⁸ So the *Alexiad* and Nicephorus' preamble form another binary historical production, like the universal history of George Syncellus-Theophanes and the two component parts of the official Macedonian history (Theophanes Continuatus, i-iv and v), only in this case yet more closely interwoven.

The late Byzantine historians, at work in the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries, conformed to the standards of format, style, and subject-matter laid down in the period before 1204.⁴⁹ They had to choose between two modes of operating, one (the *historical compendium*, covering the whole history of mankind or a large recent chunk of it) wide-ranging but inevitably gliding over the agitated surface of events rather than exploring the depths of past collective experience, the other (*fuller, contemporary history*) more probing, with much more detailed narrative. The first type has, in the past, been designated the *chronicle* and distinguished rather too sharply from the second, the *history*. While the term chronicle can be applied to most of the texts categorised above as synoptic histories, on grounds both of their scope (reaching back to the beginning of time and their concern to record events in chronological order), it should perhaps be dropped, save where it is the traditional title of a specific text, because of its connotations. Byzantine historical compendia, by and large (the exceptions are the *Chronicon Paschale* and the collaborative univer-

⁴⁷ J. Howard-Johnston, 'Anna Komnene and the *Alexiad*', in M. Mullett & D. Smythe, ed., *Alexios I Komnenos* (Belfast, 1996), 260-302; T. Gouma-Peterson, ed., *Anna Komnene and Her Times* (New York, 2000).

⁴⁸ P. Gautier, ed. & trans., *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, CFHB 9 (Brussels, 1975).

⁴⁹ See, for example, A. Simpson, *Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study* (Oxford, 2013), R. Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History* (Oxford, 2007), T. Shawcross, *The Chronicle of the Morea: Historiography in Crusader Greece* (Oxford, 2009).

sal history of George Syncellus and Theophanes), do not betray the great concern with precise chronology expected in a chronicle. Nor can they be relegated to an inferior intellectual category, either in terms of author or in the quality of the history written. It would be quite wrong to elevate the pro-Macedonian history sponsored by Constantine Porphyrogenitus above the psogic account of the Logothete, or the *Historia* of Michael Attaleiates above the *Synopsis historion* of Scylitzes. The authors came from the same milieu and were writing for the same readers, and could, as Pselus is supposed to have done, operate in both modes.⁵⁰

III

The majority of Byzantine historians were laymen. This at once marks them off from the monks and churchmen who were penning records of the past in the early medieval West. There are certain obvious exceptions — Nicephorus Patriarch of Constantinople, George Syncellus or patriarchal representative at court, Theophanes abbot of Sigriane, George the Monk, the two tenth century deacons, Theodosius and Leo, and Eustathius Metropolitan Bishop of Thessalonica in the late twelfth century. Rather too many, it may be thought, but it turns out, on closer inspection, that only one of these religious figures was completely removed from the secular world — George the Monk, whose account of mankind's past bears the marks of a limited education and a bigoted mind. The two deacons may also be characterised as worldly clerics, one (Theodosius) because of the extensive and thorough knowledge of classical literature he had acquired, the other (Leo) because of his appointment as court chaplain. George Syncellus was even more involved in secular affairs, after his appointment as Syncellus. Theophanes, it is true, was tonsured early in his life. But he belonged to a family which moved in high court circles and he duly embarked on what was evidently destined to be a successful administrative career. His act of renunciation, apparently triggered by his arranged marriage, shocked his family, but did not cut him off from the world into which he was born. He was able to found and endow

⁵⁰ Holmes, *Basil II*, 172-86.

monasteries. He built up a large library of secular as well as religious texts. He retained contacts outside his monastery. As for Nicephorus and Eustathius, they were the most laicised of all these churchmen. Nicephorus had a successful career in the civil administration and was parachuted into the church relatively late in life to take charge of the patriarchate, while Eustathius was a noted classical scholar and one of the most successful *rhetors* in Constantinople, who likewise gained preferment in the church at an advanced age.⁵¹

The laity who wrote history can be classified by background and career. There was one member of the imperial family — Anna Comnena — and one high-ranking general — her husband Nicephorus Bryennius. Three leading ministers can be picked out — the Patrician Trajan, Sergius who fell foul of the Emperor Leo V and was dismissed when, like Nicephorus and Theophanes, he refused to abjure religious images, and Michael Psellus. The mouthpiece of the aristocratic opposition to the Macedonian dynasty in the late tenth century has been identified as another leading minister, the Logothete Symeon Metaphrastes, better known for his compendium of stylistically upgraded saints' lives.⁵² The individuals from whom Constantine Porphyrogenitus commissioned his historical works were all probably well educated and intelligent officials at work in the central administration or palace like George Cedrenus, Michael Glycas and John Cinnamus in the twelfth century. There were three senior judges — John Scylitzes, Michael Attaleiates and John Zonaras. Finally Constantine Manasses was the only one of the professional literary men in twelfth-century Constantinople to turn his hand to history. He wrote his *Chronike synopsis*, like his erotic verse romance (*Aristandros and Kallithea*), on a commission from Manuel Comnenus'

⁵¹ P.J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958); A.P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, 'Eustathius of Thessalonica: The Life and Opinions of a Twelfth-Century Byzantine Rhetor', in A.P. Kazhdan & S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), 115-95.

⁵² I. Ševčenko, 'Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes', *DOP* 23-4 (1969-70), 185-228, at 215-20.

sister-in-law, the Sebastocratorissa Irene.⁵³ All but two of these writers, Anna Comnene and Manasses, belonged to what may be defined as the apparatus of government, military, civil and judicial. Both of the exceptions were impelled into the field by external forces, a patron in the case of Manasses, obligation to her dead husband in that of Anna, whose interests lay more with theology, as she makes plain in an autobiographical aside. She was only drawn into the historical sphere when her husband died before finishing his *magnum opus* on her father's reign.⁵⁴

So virtually all the historical output of Byzantium between the beginning of the eighth century and the middle of the twelfth was engendered in a bureaucratic setting, either that of the church, in the case of the men of religion, or that of the state, ranging from the very apex of power — Constantine Porphyrogenitus who commissioned more history than any other emperor — to the middle-ranking officials whom he probably recruited as his *amanuenses*. With the exception of these imperial ghost-writers and Constantine Manasses, all the early medieval historians at work in Byzantium seem to have written of their own accord. *Historical writing in Byzantium was a freelance activity on the part of what may be termed the mandarinat*. This should not cause much surprise, since, as has already been observed, the bureaucracy, which played a vital part in ensuring the survival of the most Roman of the sub-Roman states of the early middle ages, was imbued with a historical outlook. Knowledge of the past was a valuable diplomatic tool. History was a key contributor to Byzantine statecraft. Byzantium's greatest foreign policy successes — (1) the careful avoidance of Christian triumphalism in the Middle East, for fear of triggering a general *jihād*, (2) the successful incorporation of the southern and eastern Slavs into the Byzantine *oikoumene*, and (3) the summoning of the First Crusade — owed much to a sound appreciation of the fundamental cultural traits of the Arab, Slav and Western neighbours of Byzantium.

Defeat, disaster, and an often desperate struggle for survival shaped the early medieval Byzantine state. Its institutional and cultural con-

⁵³ E. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool, 2012), 271-337.

⁵⁴ *Alexias*, proem, 1.2 & 3.1-4, v.9.3.

nections with the classical past were attenuated by successive political and ideological shocks as well as the strain of apparently unending war. Byzantines underwent a searing, cauterising collective experience. In the tenth century they were as aware of their late antique past as any contemporary Christian power in Latin Christendom, but the intervening age of crisis had transformed them. Theirs was a militaristic world. The aristocracy was eager to root itself in country rather than town, so as to emancipate itself from excessive dependence on imperial preferment. It was a society which, in cultural terms, was far removed, virtually sealed off, from its earlier, sixth-century self. It required a powerful driving force, namely the patronage of an emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus with his antiquarian bent, to bring about a return to classical forms in literature and art.⁵⁵

In the sphere of art, the impact of this imperially sponsored revival was limited, mainly to the court and the minor arts. Monumental schemes of church decoration, hieratic and didactic, which had been developed in the generation following the restoration of icons in 843, proved highly resistant to classicism. Inside a church there was no need for the picturesque, for illusionist landscapes, for representation of everyday actions and gestures and emotions. The function of art there was to mark the boundary between the sacred space where the Gospel story was re-enacted in the course of the liturgical year in the presence, the real presence, of ordered ranks of bishops, saints, prophets, and angels, on the one hand, and the quotidian world outside, on the other.⁵⁶

As for historical writing, only one work, the *Life of Basil I*, commissioned by Constantine, stuck faithfully to the conventions of a classical genre (*encomium* in its case). The worldly deacons, Theodosius and Leo, both writing within a generation of Constantine's reign, should probably be seen as late products of this court-centred classical revival. But neither of them managed to do more than impart a veneer of classicism to

⁵⁵ K. Weitzmann, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination* (Chicago, 1971), 126-223.

⁵⁶ O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (London, 1948); C. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), 263-81.

their texts — an intricately patterned veneer in the case of Theodosios' *cento* of quoted classical material, a series of formal speeches by different leading characters constituting, as it were, a set of decorative panels in Leo's narrative history of the reigns of Romanus II, Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisce. Contemporary hagiography exercised more influence over the structure and tone of Leo's work than did classical historiography. Michael Psellus and Anna Comnena strove with rather greater success for classicism in the two following centuries. There is nothing surprising in this, given the character of Psellus, an intellectual eager to display his knowledge and to vaunt his linguistic virtuosity at every opportunity, and Anna's self-imposed role as his literary protégée.

Thus there was no general revival of classicism in Byzantine historical writing. Constantine Porphyrogenitus' initiative — which took place a hundred and fifty years after the revival of classicism at the court of Charlemagne — was not followed by the majority of eleventh- and twelfth-century historians, whatever their background and whatever sort of work they set out to write — whether historical compendium or more contemporary history. They were concerned rather to produce summary accounts or fuller narratives of past events in easily intelligible form. Lucid exposition and efficient transmission of historical information were the qualities they prized. History, in all its forms, was, in effect, slipping away from the sphere of literature into that of reportage. Even Manasses, whose world chronicle marks the acme of Byzantine historical production in terms of its literary quality, did not try to write classical, quantitative verse but used the stressed, political verse current in the twelfth century.⁵⁷

Constantine himself valued history above all for its utility, rather than as a vehicle for literary display or a mode of entertainment. Thus the historical guidebook to diplomacy which he commissioned, ostensibly for his 14-year-old son and heir, was intended to inform policy in the future. Consequently the language used belonged to an intermediate stylistic register, below the high-flown, ornate prose of the formal court

⁵⁷ M.J. Jeffreys, 'The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse', *DOP* 28 (1974), 141-95.

speech or private letter but staying well above the level of the vernacular. It was to be functional, like the language in everyday use in the Byzantine bureaucracy.⁵⁸ That was the mode of writing adopted by most of the ministers, judges, officials and churchmen responsible for almost all Byzantine works of history. They wrote in the style which came naturally to them, that which they used throughout their working lives. *The preferred style for a work of history was what we may call the mandarin style.*

Even the two historians who strove most strenuously failed to achieve true classicism. Psellus wrote elevated prose, with many abstruse words. He demonstrated impressive powers of *ekphrasis*, of vivid description of court scenes and individual characters, but his history is, in essence, an agglomeration of brilliant, rhetorical turns, laced with passages of unabashed self-advertisement, rather than a carefully constructed exploration and explanation of the recent past. Anna, for her part, was working from the voluminous drafts left by her husband. She did what she could to vary the subject-matter and to give the whole work literary shape. She larded the text with classical tags. She introduced passages about intellectual history into a work of primarily military history. She described in elegant prose the physical appearance of leading characters. She moulded the whole account of Alexius' reign into a grand narrative patterned on the *Odyssey*, portraying him as a hero who surmounted all manner of dangers pressing in from without.⁵⁹ In no sense, though, can the *Alexiad* be construed to be a work of classicising history. There are speeches, but they are not the focal points of the action. Instead of extensive digressions, antiquarian, geographical and ethnographic, Anna included brief philological or antiquarian glosses on words. The *Alexiad* remained, in essence, a collection of fine campaign narratives, fixed at different stages of composition. Anna was responsible for the overall structure and much linking material. The substance of the text was mandarin history of a very high order, written by the only historian with a military background

⁵⁸ Const.Porph., *DAI*, c.1.8-15.

⁵⁹ R. Macridis, 'The Pen and the Sword: Who Wrote the *Alexiad*?', in Gouma-Peterson, *Anna Komnene*, 63-81, at 67-9; Ja. Ljubarskij, 'Why is the *Alexiad* a Masterpiece of Byzantine Literature?', in *op. cit.*, 169-85, at 171-6.

known to us. Nicephorus Bryennius, as he shows in the small finished part of his projected history which deals with Alexius' rise to power, was a past master of political and military narrative, an entertaining storyteller, with a rare talent for evoking individual character in motion (rather than Anna's still portraits), through action, gesture and short snatches of speech.⁶⁰

There was no question then of Byzantine historians' bringing about a renaissance of classical history. A long dark age, in which so much was sacrificed to the war effort, emancipated the intelligentsia in the apparatus of government from the literary traditions of antiquity. Byzantine historical writing was shaped by contemporary conditions. There could be no separation between political and ecclesiastical history, since church and state were intertwined. So the two were combined and ecclesiastical history proper vanished as a distinct genre. Similarly, there was little scope for local or regional history in a world where the localities were knitted together into a single body politic. The history which was written was national or universal, with only three exceptions — (1) a bare listing of key events affecting Sicily and southern Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries, evidently compiled there, (2) Caminates' graphic narrative, which purports to be that of a contemporary, about the capture of Thessalonica by Arab naval raiders in 904 and (3) Eustathius' rhetorically overdeveloped description of its sack by the Normans in 1185.⁶¹ Caminates' text has not figured in the preceding survey of historical writing, because it was almost certainly written after 1204, perhaps more as a piece of clever writing designed to impress contemporary literary men than as a historical record.⁶² Just as rebel leaders could not conceive of secession, so servants of the state, great and not so great, with the single exception of Archbishop Eustathius, could not conceive of writing history focused anywhere else than on the capital. The closest approximations to local

⁶⁰ Howard-Johnston, 'Anna Komnene', 282-8.

⁶¹ G. Böhlig, ed., *Ioannis Caminiatae de expugnatione Thessalonicae*, CFHB 4 (Berlin, 1973). Other citations in nn. 34 and 46 above.

⁶² A.P. Kazhdan, 'Some questions addressed to the scholars who believe in the authenticity of Kaminates' "Capture of Thessalonica", *BZ* 71 (1978), 301-14.

history written in Byzantium were lives of saints and collections of their posthumous miracles. Given a voracious appetite for concrete particulars on the part of hagiographers, their works were deeply rooted in individual localities, and provide in aggregate a great deal of useful information about the economy, society and administration of the provinces, as well as the enveloping thought-world.

There was innovation in Byzantine historiography. Two new forms have been seen to develop out of those prevalent in late antiquity, the *historical compendium* and the *fuller, contemporary history*. Both, of course, were related to classical genres, universal history in the first case, secular classicising history in the second. But both had mutated. The historical compendium normally ranged back to the beginning of time, resembling in this respect the world chronicle of late antiquity, but filled out as it approached the present. The best examples of this enriched history of the recent and intermediate past are to be found in Theophanes' continuation of George Syncellus' chronicle and the continuation of Theophanes in the final section of the Logothete Symeon's chronicle. But the historical compendium could also detach itself from the remote past, as in the case of Scylitzes' *Synopsis historion*, which did not range back beyond 811. Contemporary history, for its part, was flush with detailed narrative and straddled several ancient genres — secular history, ecclesiastical history, *encomium*, *psogos*, *ekphrasis*. In only a minority of cases did it put on classical airs.

There was also experimentation, in particular with regard to the versification of history. The most original historian was George of Pisidia, writing on a commission from Heraclius around 630. Rather than rewriting the principal sources available to him, Heraclius' dispatches from the field, he adopted the modest role of editor. His official history of the victorious Byzantine counteroffensive against Sasanian Persia between 622 and 628 consisted in the main of such material excerpted and abridged from Heraclius' dispatches. To this George added at least twenty-four short poems of his own composition, none of more than 200 lines. These gave the work the expected literary embellishment and kept the spotlight firmly on the person of the emperor. Some of the poems took the form of

speeches, in which Heraclius raised the morale of his men at critical moments. Others described his personal contributions to victory — his sharing of the ordeals faced by his men, his intelligent direction of operations, and his deeds of valour on the battlefield. This was a thoroughly novel approach to the triple task of being faithful to recorded reality, of praising the emperor, and of lifting up history on to a higher literary plane.⁶³

There was a long gap before the next verse experiment, Theodosius Diaconus' account of the conquest of Crete by Nicephorus Phocas in 960-1. Theodosius, as we have seen, took a completely different line, composing his history out of phrases culled from classical texts, like a mosaic composed of recycled glass cubes. Two hundred years later came a third experiment, this time a historical compendium composed in contemporary political verse (the metre being based on stress rather than quantities). Constantine Manasses distilled the whole history of mankind up to the start of the Comnenian era into a poem of 6620 lines. History had been transmuted into semi-fiction at many points on its way to him, and some serious gaps open up, the worst concerning the Arabs who first appear as important actors in Mediterranean history in the tenth century. Manasses continued the work of embellishment, doing his utmost to transform a dry record of the past into a series of entertaining anecdotes. Like Glycas, who devoted two fifths of his history to God's fashioning of the world, its vegetation and creatures of all sorts, Manasses lingered on the six days of Creation (lines 27-297). There are numerous fine turns in the course of the history: for example an evocative word-picture (*ekphrasis*) of the Garden of Eden (lines 181-209); a gripping version of the Trojan war (lines 1209-1451) in the course of which Priam appeals for help to the Amazons (who are slaughtered), to King David (who refuses to come) and to Tantanés the Indian whose dark-skinned troops initially frighten the Greeks (lines 1353-75); tales of court intrigue from the reign of Theodosius II (lines 2515-2722); and a pantomime-like

⁶³ J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns,' in E. Dąbrowa, ed., *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East* (Kraków, 1994), 57-87, repr. in J. Howard-Johnston, *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2006), no. IV.

explanation for Leo III's espousal of iconoclasm (a trader originally, he finds himself travelling one day in the company of Jewish merchants, who plot together while he sleeps and then extract a promise that he will give them whatever they ask for if he becomes emperor [lines 4131-66]). Manasses' *Synopsis historion* is a linguistic and intellectual *tour de force* by yet another of our mandarin historians.

The most telling new development, however, affected the fundamental structure of history. Events have to be calibrated in time. There can be no history without chronology. Dates must be established using a consistent chronological system. At a minimum five such systems are attested in classical antiquity: dating from the beginning of the world; dating from the foundation of a political entity (such as the city of Rome or the Seleucid empire or the Roman province of Arabia ...); dating by regnal years of successive rulers; dating by Olympiads; and dating by consulships. Two of these survived the collective dark age trauma, years since Creation and regnal years. But they were merely subsidiary to a new prime dating system by *financial years*. It is hard to envisage any other culture in which historians would calibrate time with such a system. It is not as if it was a particularly useful system. Individual years began on 1st September rather than at the beginning of the calendar year. They were numbered by reference to the 15-year *indiction* cycle used by the treasury for the census and tax registration, as years 1, 2, 3 etc up to 15, when a new cycle would begin. Indiction cycles, which went back to 1st September 312, were not themselves numbered. So knowledge of the political context, if only of the name of the contemporary ruler, was a prerequisite for the identification of the indiction in question before a precise date could be fixed for events beyond living memory. It is a quite extraordinary dating system, but it is one which was second nature to Byzantine historians, enmeshed as they were in the bureaucracy of the state, handling as they did documents automatically dated by financial years.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ V. Grumel, *Traité d'études byzantines*, I *La chronologie* (Paris 1958), 85-97, 111-28, 191-203, 209-18.

IV

There is every reason to suppose that Byzantine historians operated in the same way as their classical predecessors, when they wrote about the recent past. Whether or not they halted, out of prudence, well before the time of writing (as was the case most notably with the Patriarch Nicephorus and Scylitzes) or ventured closer to the present, whether they were writing at length about the nearer past and refraining from delving far back in time or were dealing with recent events more cursorily in the last tranches of synoptic works which conducted wide-ranging sweeps into the deep past, they surely looked to written sources for detailed information and relied on well-placed contemporaries of the events for inside knowledge. In the case of the more distant recent past, say one or two generations back in time, this inside knowledge would have had to be culled from written contemporary accounts. In the case of contemporary and near-contemporary events, historians could use the oral testimony of participants and eyewitnesses, as well as their own experiences.⁶⁵

It was only to be expected that mandarin historians would make extensive use of documentary sources and would be inclined, in general, to allow official, written material to predominate in their texts, or at least to provide the solid base on which to build their own versions of the recent past. They were familiar with such sources, accustomed to handling them, and aware of the devices used by officialdom to skate over awkward phenomena. They would also be on their guard against the distortions and exaggerations which might be introduced as news circulated by mouth. Finally their contacts in the bureaucratic world would provide them with the inside knowledge vital to understanding what was going on behind

⁶⁵ My concern is with the prime sources for history — documents, pamphlets, personal experience and the testimony of eyewitnesses — rather than with the various writings which may have mediated between first-hand evidence and extant texts. Hence it is only exceptionally, in the cases of the political memoirs of the Patrician Trajan or the hagiographically-tinged biography of Romanus Lecapenus, both of which have left very clear traces in extant texts, and that of Sergius Confessor's history, two fragments of which survive, that I follow Treadgold's example in seeking to identify lost writings which may have supplied material to extant texts.

the scenes, what lay below the surface of official reports, what mistakes had been made and what were the strengths and weaknesses of leading figures.

The following may therefore be postulated as their principal sources of information: (1) military and diplomatic dispatches (gravid with detailed information about operations in the field and foreign relations); (2) their domestic analogues, reports from theme *strategoi* and their chief civilian colleagues, the *pronotarioi* (First Secretaries); and (3) news bulletins which a centralised state like Byzantium had to issue, to keep officialdom and the wider population informed about current affairs. In the absence of officially validated and circulated news, rumour, the perennial enemy of autocratic regimes, would be all too liable to flourish. Such is the squeezing of the sources which provisioned historical compendia, in order to fit the material within the generally narrow confines of individual entries, that it is often hard to demonstrate their official character. The same masking effect is also achieved by those historians with literary pretensions, who rewrote what they read in order to improve the style. But the presence of documentary material may be surmised if the extant text presents hard particulars with precise information about places, persons and actions, and does so in a clear and lucid manner. Occasionally the existence of a lost documentary source may be postulated with a high degree of probability, on the basis of material with such characteristics transmitted independently by two extant sources.

Like all serious historians, those writing in Byzantium needed a solid base of dated, properly articulated, documentary sources, upon which to build. Once we begin to scour both types of history, the synoptic and the more contemporary, for documents and document-based sources, we have no difficulty in turning them up. There is, for example, a large body of common material about John Tzimisces' campaign against the Rus in Bulgaria in 971 in Scylitzes' historical compendium and in Leo the Deacon's history of the recent past (959-76). It has the hallmarks of a military dispatch, presumably the official account published by Tzimisces once he had returned to Constantinople, perhaps in connection with the triumph which he celebrated. That is a far more likely source than the diary

or war-journal which has been postulated in the past.⁶⁶ Similarly dense, well-articulated campaign narratives, such as those covering Basil I's expeditions into the central borderlands in the 870s in the *Life* commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, or Scylitzes' material on Balkan warfare in the reign of Basil II, were very probably taken from official dispatches.⁶⁷ The same is probably true of Michael Attaleiates' account of Romanus IV Diogenes' short-lived counter-offensive against the Turks (1068-71), which combines the immediacy of autopsy (Attaleiates was on the emperor's staff as military judge) with the breadth of vision and grasp of detail of dispatches.⁶⁸

As for civil affairs, there was one obvious and authoritative source — the regular broadcasting of official news in government circulars. As has already been observed, it was absolutely vital for the government to keep officialdom and the public, in the capital and in the provinces, properly informed, so as to keep rumour, with all its subversive potential, in check. As new communiqués were issued, individuals may have made notes for their own benefit at the time. Copies were probably kept in different branches of the administration as well as church archives for future reference. Given wide distribution of such material, it should not have been hard to get hold of, even two or three generations on. Curtness, specificity, and clarity were key characteristics of such communiqués, as can be demonstrated from those which constitute most of the material in the last contemporary section of the *Chronicon Paschale*. Passages displaying similar characteristics, especially brief notices about important ceremonial occasions and political changes, detailed reports on natural disasters, and summary accounts of engagements fought in the vicinity

⁶⁶ Leo D., viii.1-ix.2, ix.5-11 (pp. 128-45, 147-57); Scylitzes, reign of Tzimisces, cc.9-12, 14-18 (pp. 294-303, 304-10). Diary: Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I, 368-9.

⁶⁷ Theoph.Cont., v.37-40, 46-9 (pp. 136-49, 162-77); Scylitzes, reign of Basil II and Constantine, cc. 12, 23, 26-8, 30-1, 35-8, 40-3 (pp. 330-1, 341-2, 343-5, 346-7, 348-54, 355-65).

⁶⁸ Attaleiates, 77-92, 94-104, 107-124, with Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates*, xxviii-xxix, 126-34.

of the capital as of important campaigns further afield, signal the use by later authors of official government news releases.⁶⁹

However, Byzantine history written by mandarins for mandarins, was not simply a selection of official documents, re-arranged and rephrased, for public consumption. There is plenty of evidence that they felt an urge to escape from the world of the office as well as to make use of the conveniently packaged, generally reliable information generated within that world. The antiquarian-minded, of whom there were several, turned to earlier works of history, and set about recasting them as they sought fit, bringing them up to date, introducing material from sources which they had tracked down, perhaps combining material from two or more pre-existing histories. They were responsible for the considerable number of historical compendia written in the early middle ages. The same ground was covered, but each author carried out his own research, producing his own collation of antecedent material. It was, one may guess, the bookwork and the linguistic restyling involved in this sort of work which attracted civil servants, active or retired, to history of the remoter past. The level of scholarship varied from author to author, Theophanes (who had the means to build up a considerable library of his own), the scholar known to us as ps.Symeon Magister and the senior judge Zonaras, standing at one extreme, George the Monk at the other.

⁶⁹ Some examples from Theophanes and Symeon Logothete: (1) court circulars and politics — Theoph. 401.9–12 (coronation of Constantine V as a baby at Easter 720), 443.28–444.8 (coronation of Constantine V's third wife, Eudocia, as Augusta, and bestowal of titles on three of his sons on Easter Saturday and Sunday 769), 449.17–450.23 (ceremonies to secure the sworn support of all sections of society for the rule of Leo IV and the succession of his son Constantine VI in Easter week 776), Log., 136.9 (Augusta Zoe removed from palace, late summer 919), 136.12 (acclamation of Christopher Lecapenus on 17th May 922, his coronation as co-emperor by Constantine Porphyrogenitus at Pentecost [20th May] and their subsequent procession together), 136.21 (death of Romanus' wife, the Augusta Theodora, 20th February 922), 136.22 (state visit of the Curopalate of Iberia, 922); (2) natural disasters — Theoph., 412.6–16 (Constantinople earthquake, 26th October 740); (3) warfare — Theoph., 449.9–11, 451.4–5, 451.11–27, 452.4–17, 452.20–3, 453.20–5, 456.2–23 (operations in Asia Minor and beyond, 776–82), Log., 136.17, 19–20, 23–4, 27 (Bulgar raids on metropolitan area and temporary capture of Adrianople, 921–3), 136.71–5 (941 Rus attack and Byzantine response).

A liking for literary sources also showed itself, at the highest level, in the team working on Constantine Porphyrogenitus' historical projects. Even when it came to his practical handbook of diplomacy, his writers made almost as much use of the imperial library as of the state archives. Documentary material is included — a detailed account of the Dniepr route from Kiev to the Black Sea, intelligence information about two northern nomad peoples (written up around 900), a summary of recent diplomatic dealings with Armenian, Georgian and Muslim powers in western Armenia, not to mention some administrative data. There is also a certain amount of document-based information, which has been thoroughly reworked — most obviously in a dossier about the Balkans (dating from around 900 but updated).⁷⁰ The text is thus a goldmine for modern historians. But material taken from documents forms but one element in the text, much of which consists of passages reproduced or summarised from older histories.⁷¹ The balance is yet more in favour of material culled from books (presumably found in the palace library) in the case of the two histories commissioned by Constantine, while his multi-volume thematic historical compendium consists entirely of excerpts from older histories.

Of course, all the histories used by Constantine's literary aides and by independent historians drew ultimately on lived experience, on autopsy. The point, though, is that almost always there was at least one intermediary text separating historian from the historical phenomena of his own and recent times and that the intervening writer would play around with the material, reshaping it, improving it, altering the style. The extreme modesty of the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* and his contemporary George of Pisidia, who simply acted as conduits for documentary material, is seldom to be found after the seventh century.⁷² Most writers

⁷⁰ *DAI*, cc. 9 (Dniepr route), 29–36 (Balkan dossier), 37–9 (northern nomads), 43–6 (western Armenia). Cf. J. Howard-Johnston, 'The *De Administrando Imperio*: A Re-examination of the Text and a Re-evaluation of its Evidence about the Rus', in M. Kazanski, A. Necessian and C. Zuckerman, ed., *Les centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient* (Paris, 2000), 301–36.

⁷¹ *DAI*, cc. 14–15, 17–22, 25, 27–8, 47, 49, 53.

⁷² Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 57–9, 292–3, 420–3.

who ventured into the recent past and produced texts used by later historians did not purge their writing of emotion. Some made little effort to tone down their views. This is true of the memoirs of the Patrician Trajan and, much later, of Michael Psellus' vivid, eyewitness court history, which is, in effect, an account of his own experiences. Others may well have injected more emotion than they felt for the sake of rhetorical effect, or because they were writing to order and adhering to the conventions of long-established genres. An important category was that of the laudatory biography which has already been encountered among Theophylact Simocatta's sources, commissioned to burnish a reputation or to enhance a family's standing.⁷³ It might well be based on documents but a fair amount of glossing and filleting of material would be required to present the subject in as favourable a light as possible. Then there were tracts with a yet more obvious political purpose, targeted on a personage of note, which might be written in the heat of political combat, or devised more coolly to mock or to spite a political enemy.

In their private literary ventures, the mandarins went hunting for colourful material, which they found in abundance in the pamphlet literature of Byzantium. These ephemeral writings fell into several recognised genres, each with its own conventions. The *encomium* would begin with the subject's family, birth and upbringing, before dealing as fulsomely as possible with his adult life and achievements in war and peace and concluding with a section on his private life and character and (if it was a complete biography) his final encounter with death. Constantine Porphyrogenitus commissioned a laudatory biography of this sort about his grandfather Basil I, founder of the Macedonian dynasty.⁷⁴ The contributions of many others which have been lost can be discerned in the pages of extant histories. Thus, for example, much of the material filling the last part of the Logothete's history has been taken from a lost biography of Romanus Lecapenus, which concentrated on his moral rehabilitation, after his illicit seizure of power, through acts of charity. A collective biography, of Romanus' leading general, John Curcuas, his brother,

⁷³ Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, 94-105, 230-3.

⁷⁴ Jenkins, 'Classical Background', 19-22.

Theophilus, and great-nephew, John Tzimisces, is summarised in the revised and extended edition of the Logothete's work, which was tacked on to the histories sponsored by Constantine Porphyrogenitus to form book vi of the Continuation of Theophanes.⁷⁵ There can be little doubt about its ulterior political purpose, to further the career of Curcuas' nephew John Tzimisces, the senior field commander in the east at the time, who was to usurp the throne in 969. Substantial deposits from others are to be found in the historical compendium of John Scylitzes, written a century or so later. Perhaps the most important of these encomiastic sources was a laudatory biography of Cecaumenus Catacalon, detailing his military achievements in the 1030s and 1040s and composed between Isaac Comnenus' coup in 1057 (his role is described) and 1060.⁷⁶

Encomia were bracketed with their antitheses, psogs, by Michael Psellus, who regarded history as an amalgam of the two.⁷⁷ Psogs (from Greek *psogoi*) were of two sorts: works of serious invective, aimed at savaging reputations, and lampoons, more concerned to poke fun at their butts and to entertain their readers. The most famous extant example of the genre is Procopius' *Secret History* in which he goes to absurd lengths to denigrate the reigning emperor Justinian and his great general Belisarius, together with their wives. Both types of psog, the repository of bile, bitterness, resentment and envy, on the one hand, and the virtuoso performance by an author out to amuse or to shock, on the other, had to be produced clandestinely in what was, after all, a despotic state, with limited freedom of expression. Most of them have perished — mainly because their authors had to restrict their circulation for their own safety (especially if some of their fire was directed at the reigning emperor or key members of his regime) and there were no obvious beneficiaries with an interest in conserving them and passing them on to future generations. But they have left numerous traces in extant texts, notably in the anti-history of the Macedonian dynasty which forms the last part of the

⁷⁵ See n. 29 above.

⁷⁶ J. Shepard, 'A Suspected Source of Scylitzes' *Synopsis Historion: The Great Catacalon Cecaumenus*, *BMGS* 16 (1992), 171–81.

⁷⁷ Psellus, *Chronographia*, vi.22–8.

Logothete's universal history. The Logothete seems to have gone to considerable trouble to assemble a library of psogs and to make use of every bit of dirt which he could find. He was outdone by a later scholar, who managed to track down a wonderful character assassination of the Patriarch Photius and included a summary of the juiciest bits in his edition of the Logothete's work.⁷⁸

There is more hectoring, more exaggeration, more invention in such works of denigration than in *encomia* written to burnish reputations and to boost the political standing of individuals and their families. The latter, if handled with care, will yield much useful historical material. Psogs, on the other hand, may contain gross slanders and must be approached in a spirit of determined scepticism. One of the modern historian's prime tasks is to identify material of psogic origin in the pages of extant histories and then to be on guard against baseless allegations. Difficult issues, some of them major historical cruxes, can be resolved when it is realised that one or more key pieces of evidence have been taken from a psog and may well be pure invention. Thus, to take a famous example, the imperial coronation of the Bulgar ruler Symeon, which, the Logothete says, took place at a summit meeting with the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus in autumn 913 outside Constantinople, an episode which has generated hundreds, if not thousands, of pages of learned discussion, almost certainly derives from a psog of Nicholas, which has left other traces in the Logothete's history. It is highly likely that it is the psogist's invention. With this piece of jarring evidence jettisoned, it is much easier to make sense of a fraught period in Bulgar-Byzantine relations.⁷⁹

What else did Byzantium's historians use, beside these tendentious works? A distinctive strand of expansive military narrative runs through many of their works. It is more detailed and more vivid, told in a more anecdotal style, than might be expected of an *encomium*. There may be

⁷⁸ Sym.Mag., 668.15-674.12.

⁷⁹ Log., 135.11, with J.D. Howard-Johnston, 'A Short Piece of Narrative History: War and Diplomacy in the Balkans, Winter 921/2-Spring 924', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman* (Cambridge, 2006), 340-60, at 341-2.

snatches of dialogue. A noted holy man may figure as a source of guidance. Heroic acts on the battlefield may be graphically described. The emphasis is on individual character, on physical prowess and mental dexterity. The hero overpowers and outwits his antagonists in tales of derring-do. Such material abounds in the ninth-century history commissioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and appears in clusters in the last part of John Scylitzes' historical compendium. Its ultimate origin is probably to be found in stories told soon after the events in question, when combatants exchanged experiences. How they lived on and were transmitted to historical texts must remain a matter of speculation, but it is likely that they could only do so if they were picked up and retailed by professional story-tellers or minstrels in the houses of the great, especially if they were related to the protagonists. Some, at any rate, much changed and stripped of their original family connections, form the core of the *Digenes Akrites*, a hybrid epic/romance poem composed in the early twelfth century. It is not surprising that the armchair historians of Byzantium, few of whom had been really touched by war, had a penchant for such tales of adventure.⁸⁰

There remains a fundamental difference between histories which grew directly out of real life, out of the personal experience of the writer, and were subsequently filled out with information extracted from written or oral sources, on the one hand, and more bookish works, rooted in close reading of key texts and more or less energetic research, on the other. The ideal combination of lived history and extensive, directed reading and interrogation, is seldom encountered. Ammianus Marcellinus provides a late antique example — he made full use of his own experience as a serving officer in the field and conducted archival research in Rome in later life.⁸¹ A second example is provided by Priscus of Panium

⁸⁰ H. Grégoire, *Autour de l'épopée byzantine* (London, 1975), nos. IV, VII, VIII, XVII; E. Jeffreys, ed. & trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, xvi.12.69–70. Momigliano, 'The Lonely Historian Ammianus Marcellinus', in *Essays*, 127–40; N.J.E. Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare: An Investigation into Ammianus' Military Knowledge*, Collection Latomus 165 (Brussels, 1979), 12–21, 102–116.

who leavened his history with first-hand diplomatic experience of the Hunnic court in the heyday of Attila's power.⁸² We then have to wait until the eleventh and twelfth centuries to find three further exponents of this fully grounded history: Michael Attaleiates who could draw on wide reading of earlier material, much of it biographical, as well as memories gathered on campaign with Romanos IV Diogenes and familiarity with Constantinople and Raidestus; Nicephorus Bryennius who sought out official records with remarkable success and could also draw on the knowledge and understanding of military operations and high-level politics acquired over many years; and his widow Anna Comnena, who drew on written sources (which she disparaged), on the memories of old soldiers who had retired to monasteries, and on what she remembered hearing from her father and uncles, but could also use her own memory to conjure up the physiognomies of individuals whom she knew (notably Bohemond) and scenes which she had witnessed in person (notably her father's deathbed).⁸³

For the most part, though, histories fall into one or the other category. While Procopius' *History of the Wars* is best understood as an embellished version of a contemporary record of what he had witnessed and heard on campaign, Agathias and Theophylact Simocatta, two of his continuators whose works survive complete, were very much armchair historians, who stayed put in Constantinople and were reasonably assiduous gatherers of source material. The Patrician Trajan and Michael Psellus were later examples of historians who relied to varying degrees on personal knowledge of the court and high politics, and whose works were to a considerable extent suffused by their own prejudices. The imperial team put to work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus carried out the most extensive research, but without much exertion on their part, since they were given access to the imperial library and that amassed by Theophanes. The works of Theophanes himself and his mentor, George Syncellus, are

⁸² Priscus, fr.11.2, ed. & trans. Blockley, 246-79.

⁸³ Krallis, xxvii-xxxiv; *Alexias*, xiv.7.7 (sources), xv.11.4-21 (deathbed); Howard-Johnston, 'Anna Komnene and the *Alexiad*', 266-9, 276-82.

other examples of research-based history, along with Scylitzes' historical compendium.

V

We come finally to the content and character of Byzantine histories. Variegated although they are in scope, form and sources used, they have a number of features in common. These mark them off from the historical productions of contemporary, historically alert cultures in Latin Christendom, the Caliphate (including its Christian elements) and China.

Human beings cannot but be aware of the passage of time, of its movement in a single direction, all experience lying in the trail which it has made. For historians, striving to capture the multidimensional experiences of complex aggregations of humanity and to reduce them to an intelligible linear narrative, movement through time looms yet larger. Byzantine historians were no exception. If anything, they were yet more alert to the working of time, given the knowledge percolating into society at large, or at least its educated levels, from the universal histories of the Eusebian tradition. Whatever form of history they chose to write, they could not but be aware of grand, providential history. Time began on third day of Creation, Wednesday March 21st, when the celestial time-pieces were formed.⁸⁴ It would continue to run forward through the Last Days, to end with the destruction of the cosmos and the Last Judgement.

In the intervening millennia, much happened. Change, an unceasing flux in the affairs of men and nations, was the principal mark of history viewed in the short and medium term. The overall structure of the cosmos might remain the same. There might be regular cycles in the movements of the stars, just as there was a regular round of ceremonies in the imperial court and of feast-days in the church, but fortune played games with mankind — disasters in the form of earthquakes, floods, fires, eruptions, diseases came upon them unpredictably, at irregular intervals. Some peoples were favoured by the environment — climate, soil and location — while others had to struggle to make a living in relatively inhospitable

⁸⁴ *Chronicon Paschale*, 26-7.

pitiable mountain terrain or marginal steppe. Peoples and the political entities into which they were organised might set off on grand trajectories of conquest or mercantile success or intellectual, literary and artistic endeavour, only to fall back in time and be replaced by others. Families and individuals would similarly rise and fall within individual polities. It was these vagaries of particular fortunes, above all the processes and outcomes of combat, political and military, which engaged the attention of historians working in the Greco-Roman tradition in the late antique empire and early medieval Byzantium.⁸⁵

The viewpoint was elevated — that of the governing elite — and the subject-matter was the actions and reactions of its leading members in war and peace. It was top-down history, a world away from that of the local monastic chronicles of Latin Christendom, and at odds with Arab accounts of the early history and expansion of the Muslim community, consisting as they did in the main of bewildering assemblages of individual narratives, that is history written as it were from the point of view of enlisted men rather than the high command.⁸⁶ There was a shared awareness among Byzantine historians of Byzantium's role as the premier Christian state. Its grand imperial past was not forgotten, but the governing elite had adapted to life in the very different conditions created by the rise of a hegemonic Islamic state in the immediate vicinity and the drifting away of the sub-Roman kingdoms of the west. Its members could take pride in their past and gain confidence from their special, close relations with God, as a latterday Israel, a uniquely privileged, Peculiar People.⁸⁷

When things went wrong, especially when a succession of damaging blows were suffered — at the hands of Bulgars, for example, in the early ninth, late ninth and early tenth centuries, or, with longer-lasting consequences, at the hands of the Turks in the later eleventh century — historians were well aware of theodicy, of God's punishing His people for

⁸⁵ A. Momigliano, 'Some Observations on the Causes of War in Ancient Historiography', in Momigliano, *Studies*, 112-26.

⁸⁶ A point made by Stephen Humphreys in a paper on Tabari and Sayf b. 'Umar which he gave to a colloquium on Tabari held at St. Andrews in 1995 — not published, alas, in H. Kennedy, ed., *Al-Tabari: A Medieval Historian and His Work* (Princeton, 2008).

⁸⁷ H. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975), 29-36.

their sins.⁸⁸ But with the exception of Theophanes and George the Monk, such higher level explanations were not to the fore. Historians were preoccupied rather with *human* causes — with the performance of individuals and groups whose decisions and actions shaped the course of events. History was, as it should be, a narrative involving human players, acting and reacting in ever-changing circumstances. At first the individuals were stick creatures, human beings stripped down to a few moral qualities and viewed simply as the entities which propelled events. But from the middle of the tenth century their individual characters and appearances became subjects of greater interest to historians.⁸⁹ Military prowess, manifest in individual heroic feats on the battlefield, and leadership loomed larger than before. Away from the battlefield, the imperial court was populated by vividly portrayed personages in Psellus' *Chronographia*. It was with Nicephorus Bryennius, though, that the art of historical portraiture reached its acme. He captured characters in action, speaking, moving, gesturing, in that particular type of gripping anecdote which he developed (and which is to be found throughout his widow's *Alexiad*).⁹⁰

Insofar as a theory of historical causation can be discerned in their variegated works, Byzantine historians should be put firmly in the category of realist, pragmatic historians. They understood that the actual course of events was the outcome of a complex interplay of individuals and groups, particular decisions and particular actions taken in the course of their implementation shaping earthly affairs. When new players came into view, say the Bulgars in the seventh century or the Turks in the eleventh, they introduced pauses into the main narrative to make room for excursions on the back-stories of peoples who would have a dramatic impact on Byzantium.⁹¹ Theirs was a category of history which paid proper attention both to chronology, acknowledging that the chain

⁸⁸ Van Nuffelen, *Héritage de paix et de piété*, 292-309.

⁸⁹ M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204: A Political History* (London, 1984), 79-82; A. Markopoulos, 'Byzantine History Writing at the End of the First Millennium', in P. Magdalino, ed., *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 183-97.

⁹⁰ Howard-Johnston, 'Anna Komnene and the *Alexiad*', 282-8.

⁹¹ Theoph., 356.18-358.11 (Bulgars); Bryennius, i.7-10, taken from Scylitzes, 442-7 (Turks).

of cause and effect ran in a single direction, and to the complexity of human affairs — a category of which Christopher Clark's *Sleepwalkers* (on the origins of the First World War) is an outstanding recent example.⁹² They were aware of a higher supernatural sphere, where divine oversight was exercised over earthly affairs and from which interventions might be made if there were flagrant sins to be punished or if a city invoked the aid of its chosen supernatural protector. But such higher powers remained in the background, in shadow, while the spotlight played upon human actors.⁹³

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Byzantine histories was their narrow spatial focus. They looked intently at what was taken to be the main political arena, Constantinople with palace and court at its centre. In the hands of its practitioners, Byzantine history became the history of emperors, their wives, their leading ministers and generals. Court intrigues, conspiracies and *coups d'état*, the fates of individual courtiers, punishments (execution, mutilation, public humiliation, exile), and all manner of action initiated at the centre form the main stuff of history. The action is dominated by military and, to a lesser extent, naval operations. For warfare remained at the heart of history, as it had been from the first. Everything, including warfare, was viewed from the centre. Provincial events only featured when they impinged directly on the centre — threatening, say, in the case of rebellions, or demanding palliative action, in the case of natural disasters, or capturing the attention of the emperor, in the case of holy men and venerated shrines, or producing prodigies meriting coverage as examples of the bizarre or exotic. Large-scale enemy action is covered whenever it demanded a response from the centre, above all when it affected the metropolitan region directly. Minor frontier warfare and defensive guerrilla operations in the interior, for example, were almost entirely passed over in silence. It was also only very occasionally and incidentally that information was provided about the processes of government in the localities, about the social order outside

⁹² C. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London, 2012).

⁹³ Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates*, 171-211.

Constantinople and about trade and manufacturing in the centre or the provinces.

Byzantine history was in essence metropolitan and confined to the political and military spheres. It was not, however, self-regarding, in the sense of disdaining foreign peoples or relegating them to a single category of inferior others. Byzantium's neighbours were distinguished from each other and individually characterised by their historical pasts, their territories and their institutions, most fully in the *De administrando imperio*. Nonetheless the devouring interest of Arab geographers in routes, cities, natural produce and manufactured goods in distant regions of the caliphate and beyond its borders was not paralleled.⁹⁴ Byzantine writers limited their concern to political structures (and the military power which might be generated by them). There is indeed a striking dearth of new geographical writing, Byzantine intellectuals being content to reproduce and study classical texts.⁹⁵

In no way may the writings of Byzantine historians be classified as *philosophical*. They were content to chronicle the past and to seek out causes in what had been done, rightly or wrongly, and in what had not been done. Human beings were the prime movers. Historians, then as now, knew that decisions and lines of action were influenced by factors beyond the individual's control, but they did not seek to define what those underlying, shaping influences might be. They did not look for fundamental causes in the social and institutional framework of political life, nor in the economic systems supporting political structures, nor in the realm of ideas, where new avenues might suddenly be opened up to individuals and groups. They were aware, though, that human beings, the desires and emotions and reasoning of human beings, the appetite for personal gain and the countervailing concern for their fellows to be found in all souls were historical constants.⁹⁶ They took it that an important func-

⁹⁴ A. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1967-1988), I, 35-362.

⁹⁵ Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I, 507-14, 517-19, 532-7.

⁹⁶ Cf. P. Ghosh, 'Hugh Trevor-Roper and the History of Ideas', *History of European Ideas*, 37 (2011), 483-505, at 494, 497-8, 502-4.

tion of history, apart from the conserving of the past from oblivion, was to maintain and improve moral standards in the present and the future.

That should be seen as the driving force behind the grandest of the histories conceived in early medieval Byzantium, the historical project sponsored by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. He was determined not only to bring the historical record down from 813, where Theophanes had left off, rather closer to the present (in the process justifying the seizure of power by his grandfather, Basil I), but also to fill out the linear narrative from the beginning of time as presented in four distinct but connected works (those of George Syncellus and Theophanes as well as the two he commissioned) with a huge anthology of material taken from other writings on fifty-three different aspects of life on earth. The spirit behind this project can be said to be semi-philosophical, in that it bespoke a realisation that much else was involved in the patterning of events besides the human will, that there was an extraordinary variety in human affairs and that change, manifest especially in the fluctuation of fortune, was perpetual within time. The great Paul Lemerle was assuredly misguided to view the *Excerpta* as a gauge of a profoundly anti-historical attitude.⁹⁷

VI

The fates of Byzantine historical texts were varied. Some have a rich manuscript tradition, an indication that they were widely and frequently read. Others hang by the thinnest of threads, a single complete manuscript and a second fragmentary one in the case of Psellus' *Chronographia*, a single manuscript which disappeared in the seventeenth century in the case of Nicephorus Bryennius' nearly finished prologue to the *Alexiad*.⁹⁸ Others have only been preserved in fragments, like Sergius' history of the late eighth and early ninth century, or have to be pieced together out of material recycled in later texts, like the Patrician Trajan's personal and highly-charged history of his own times. Of the two principal types of history it was the historical compendium which attracted a

⁹⁷ Lemerle, *Premier humanisme byzantin*, 280-8; cf. also Flusin, 'Excerpta', 537-59.

⁹⁸ Pietsch, *Michael Psellos*, 2; Gautier, *Nic. Bry. hist.*, 32-6.

large readership, while none of the fuller contemporary histories written before 1204 survives in more than five manuscripts predating the fall of Constantinople. The difference is attributable to the preference of monastic readers for works which oriented them and their world with respect to the distant past and God's oversight of earthly affairs, as against detailed accounts of high politics and warfare. For most of our manuscripts, including the 600 extant historical manuscripts, come from monastic libraries.⁹⁹

Byzantine readers, monastic as well as lay and clerical, were discerning. It is the high-calibre works of both types which proved most popular. The best-seller, deservedly so, was the world history in verse of Constantine Manasses with well over a hundred manuscripts (and a Slavonic translation), followed by Zonaras' massive, scholarly work with seventy-two. Of contemporary histories, it was again the widely acknowledged masterpiece produced by the husband and wife team of Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena which led the field with three extant Byzantine manuscripts of the full text and two of an epitome, followed by the works of Cinnamus, Attaleiates and the Patriarch Nicephorus.¹⁰⁰ It was Byzantine readers' discernment which also ensured that classical histories which had achieved canonical status in the Roman period — above all Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon — were transmitted to us, although they did allow much else to disappear, notably on the Hellenistic period.¹⁰¹

The single most striking feature of Byzantine historical production is its variety. It is perhaps the last thing we would expect from a collective body of authors enmeshed in the bureaucratic processes of government. In its darkest years, the years of guerrilla warfare against a much more powerful eastern foe, the state took control of the affairs of its citizens to an unprecedented degree. Large numbers were conscripted into

⁹⁹ Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 484-7.

¹⁰⁰ Lampsidis, *Manassis brev.chron.*, lxxvii-xcviii; Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I, 418 (Zonaras); Reinsch-Kambylis, *Alexias*, 13*-28*; Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 484-7.

¹⁰¹ Kaldellis, 'Byzantine Role', 78-81.

the armed forces. The economy was managed from above, in a very un-Roman way, the warehouses (*apothecae*) of customs officials (*commercarii*) probably functioning as the main arenas of market exchange in the provinces. Direct taxation reached inside the village and tapped the resources of individual households more than ever before. But instead of the regimentation which one might expect among the ranks of historians who wrote in what remained thereafter an authoritarian and centralised state, we find a body of historians distinguished above all by their individualism. It was not just that they were reacting after the grim centuries of struggle and cultural austerity — if so, they would probably have turned back to late antiquity and aped, rather than merely continuing, the histories written then. Each historian went his (or her) own way: in the case of world histories they combined material from earlier sources in different ways to produce versions of their own; those who wrote about the recent past operated at different stylistic levels and had their own narrative techniques, some more concerned with the literary patina, others with vivid evocations of places and persons.

The rhetorical training to which all those with literary pretensions were subjected was the great solvent of dull conformity. Exercises of many sorts — in different genres, aiming to drive an argument or to stir up emotion, speaking or writing from the perspective of different historical or fictional characters, striving for elaborate ornamentation or for limpid clarity ... — helped to develop the individual voices of authors of all sorts, including historians.¹⁰² A similar function was performed by the classical education current in Europe from the Renaissance to the late twentieth century (and continuing in one Australian school) — the weekly task of writing Latin and Greek prose and verse compositions in different styles was an extraordinarily effective way of developing mastery of language and of learning to reason and express ideas in distinctive ways.

¹⁰² R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, 2009); E. Jeffreys, ed, *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003); Magdalino, *Manuel Komnenos*, 335-6.

It was classical rhetoric along with the natural talent of individual writers which was responsible for the large and variegated historical bequest of Byzantium to later ages.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Cf. Kaldellis, 'Corpus of Byzantine Historiography', 218-19.

Felix Jacoby – Lebensstationen und Werke

Felix Jacoby (19. März 1876–10. November 1959) hatte von 1907 bis 1935 einen der beiden Lehrstühle für Klassische Philologie am Philologischen Seminar der Christian-Albrechts-Universität inne und war währenddessen auch Direktor dieser Einrichtung. Auf seiner Stelle war er Nachfolger des Gräzisten Paul Wendland (1864–1915).

Nicht zuletzt in seiner langen Kieler Zeit verfaßte Felix Jacoby das Werk, das ihn in den Altertumswissenschaften ‚unsterblich‘ machen wird und das ihm später, von Seiten eines seiner Oxforder Kollegen, Robert Dundas, die Wertschätzung als „the most learned man in Europe“ einbringen sollte: *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker (FGrHist)*, eine Sammlung der Fragmente, d.h. Zitate bei späteren Autoren, der unvollständigen oder gar gänzlich verlorenen griechischen Historiker der Antike. Es erscheint heute unvorstellbar, daß ein einzelner Gelehrter ein solches Mammutunternehmen in 17 Bänden allein bewerkstelligen können sollte, und es verwundert nicht, daß dieses Werk inzwischen auf der Grundlage der Jacoby'schen Unterlagen als internationales Kooperationsprojekt fortgesetzt wird.

Neben dieser Sammlung legte Felix Jacoby – in Kiel und Oxford, in das er 1939 hatte fliehen müssen – zahlreiche umfangreiche Monographien und Aufsätze vor, darunter Beiträge für die *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft (RE)*. Aus dem diesbezüglichen sonstigen Oeuvre ragen die *Atthis* (1949), ein Werk zur athenischen Lokalgeschichte nach Herodot, und der Artikel *Herodot* für die RE heraus. Weiterhin edierte Jacoby ein Buch zu Hesiod und verfaßte mehrere Artikel zur griechischen Literatur und zur lateinischen Poesie.

Jacoby wurde in Magdeburg als Sohn jüdischer Eltern geboren und besuchte in seiner Heimatstadt ab dem Jahre 1885 das Pädagogium zum Kloster unserer Lieben Frauen, eines der bedeutenden humanistischen Gymnasien Norddeutschlands; dort legte er auch 1894 seine Abiturprüfung ab. Bereits im Alter von elf Jahren wurde der Schüler in der St. Johanniskirche evangelisch getauft, die Konfirmation folgte daselbst 1891.

Das Studium der Klassischen Philologie begann Jacoby 1894 in Freiburg, legte es, wie sein „Studien- und Sittenzeugnis“ beweist, jedoch ungewöhnlich breit an: So hörte er neben den engeren Fachveranstaltungen auch solche in Mittelalterlicher Deutscher Literatur, in Sanskrit, Gotisch und Neuerer Deutscher Geschichte. Bereits ein Semester später wechselte Felix Jacoby – unter Wahrung seiner transdisziplinären Interessen – nach München, schließlich 1896 nach Berlin, das gerade auch wegen Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff und Hermann Diels als Mekka der deutschen Altphilologie galt; bei Hermann Diels wurde er schließlich auch im Dezember 1900 mit einer Dissertation zum Thema *De Apollodori Atheniensis chronicis* zum Doktor der Philosophie promoviert.

1901 heiratete Felix Jacoby Margarethe Johanne von der Leyen, die die wichtigste Mitarbeiterin ihres Mannes bei der Herausgabe seiner wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten werden sollte. Dem Ehepaar wurden zwei Söhne, Hans und Georg, geboren. Zum Wintersemester 1903/04 übernahm Jacoby in Breslau eine Hochschulassistentur und habilitierte sich bereits ein Jahr später bei Eduard Norden mit einer Arbeit über das *Marmor Parium*, eine in Fragmenten erhaltene hellenistische Chronik von der Insel Paros, eine Schrift, die er Wilamowitz widmete und die er später als FG rHist 239 neu edierte. Von Breslau aus erfolgte dann, wie erwähnt, die Berufung nach Kiel, die nicht zuletzt durch den Einsatz von Wilamowitz zustande kam, als dessen Schüler sich Jacoby zeit seines Lebens verstand. In Kiel blieb Felix Jacoby bis zu seinem Ausscheiden aus dem Lehrkörper der Universität im Frühjahr 1935, wobei er 1927 einen ehrenvollen Ruf nach Hamburg ablehnte.

Wohnhaft war er in Kitzberg, jenseits der Förde, und er nahm zumeist die Fähre, um zur Universität zu gelangen. Wenn das Wetter schlecht war oder ihn unaufschiebbare Arbeit von den Lehrverpflichtungen abhielt, pflegte Jacoby seine Assistentin, Marie Wunsch, anzurufen und anzukündigen: „Das Schiffchen fährt heute nicht“. Diese ‚unzuverlässige‘ *Navicula Chiloniensis* wurde auch im Titel seiner Festschrift im Jahre 1956 verewigt. Im Oktober 1934 suchte Felix Jacoby, obgleich er anfänglich der ‚Machtergreifung‘ nicht gänzlich ablehnend gegenüberstand, angesichts der nationalsozialistischen Maßnahmen gegen „nicht-

arische“ Beamte um Entbindung von den amtlichen Verpflichtungen nach. Seine Begründung ist noch heute lesenswert und nötigt Respekt ab:

„Zu fragen habe ich allein, ob die Arbeits- und Gesinnungsgemeinschaft, die bisher zwischen meinen Studenten und mir bestanden hat und die m. E. die Vorbedingung für einen sinn- und zweckvollen Unterricht ist, aufrecht erhalten werden kann. Es besteht zumindestens in den Geisteswissenschaften und, wie ich glaube, vor allem in der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft keine Möglichkeit, Erziehung und Unterricht von einander zu trennen und sich, wie es jetzt von dem nichtarischen Lehrer verlangt wird, auf die Übermittlung von Kenntnissen oder auf Einführung in die Methoden der Wissenschaft zu beschränken. Ein so gestalteter Unterricht würde, selbst wenn er denkbar wäre, jeden Sinn verlieren, weil er auf das Wesentlichste, die Charakterbildung durch den Geist großer Autoren der Antike, verzichten müßte und dadurch zu einem äußerlichen Betriebe werden würde, wie ihn grade jetzt nicht nur die besten, sondern die große Mehrzahl der Studenten überhaupt mit Entschiedenheit ablehnt. Ansprüche in dieser Richtung sind denn auch von meinen Schülern an mich nicht gestellt worden; ich habe im Gegenteil durchaus das Gefühl, daß das Band zwischen ihnen und mir in den letzten beiden Semestern eher noch enger geworden ist als es schon früher war. Aber die persönliche Bindung an einen nichtarischen Dozenten mag im Einzelfalle und für den Moment noch zu stark sein, es ist m.E. unausbleiblich, daß auf die Dauer zwischen solchen persönlichen Bindungen und der Grundanschauung des neuen Geistes eine unüberwindliche Antinomie entsteht. Passiv abzuwarten bis diese Antinomie sich geltend gemacht und zu nachweisbarer Schädigung der Ausbildung geführt hat, scheint bei dem steten und schnellen Nachwuchs einer unter neuen Voraussetzungen erzeugten Jugend wenig zweckvoll. Vor allem aber steht einem Entschluß, die Entwicklung abzuwarten, die Tatsache entgegen, daß schon jetzt meine Schüler durch die Haltung und Tätigkeit der maßgebenden Studentenschaft in einen inneren Konflikt zwischen persönlicher Anhänglichkeit und grundsätz-

licher Überzeugung getrieben werden, der entweder einen sinnvollen d.h. einen erzieherisch wirksamen Unterricht unmöglich machen muß oder die einzelnen Studenten Gefahren aussetzt, denen sie ihr eigener Lehrer m.E. nicht aussetzen darf.“

Diesem Gesuch wurde zum 1. April 1935 stattgegeben. Seit diesem Jahr bei seinem Sohn Hans in Finkenkrug bei Berlin wohnhaft, wurde Jacoby am 9. November 1938 persönlich von dem Pogrom betroffen und betrieb daraufhin seine Emigration nach Großbritannien, die glücklicherweise im Frühjahr 1939 – dank des Einsatzes zahlreicher Kollegen und Institutionen – auch zustande kam. Die beiden wichtigsten Betreiber der Immigration (und damit der Rettung) Jacobys waren der berühmte britische Philologe Theodore Wade-Gery und Jacobys früherer Kieler Kollege Eduard Fraenkel, der selbst einige Jahre zuvor seinen Lehrstuhl in Freiburg verloren hatte. Im April 1939 erreichte das Ehepaar Jacoby Oxford, 1948 wurden sie in England eingebürgert.

Kurz vor seiner Rückkehr nach Deutschland, die erst durch die 1956 erfolgte Bewilligung seiner Emeritenbezüge ermöglicht worden war, verlieh ihm die Universität Oxford den Dokortitel *honoris causa*; die Christiana Albertina ehrte ihn mit einer Festschrift und ernannte ihn zum Ehrensenator, ohne allerdings dabei das Verhalten der Alma Mater im Dritten Reich wirklich kritisch zu reflektieren. Dies geschah erst kürzlich in einer von der Universität geförderten Dissertation (A. Wittram).

Unmittelbar nach der Rückkehr nach Berlin, am 21. März 1956, verstarb Jacobys Frau, seine unverzichtbare gelehrte Mitarbeiterin. Ihr folgte Felix Jacoby drei Jahre später, am 10. November 1959, nach.

Auch Jacobys Sohn Eduard Georg, ein Kieler Schüler Ferdinand Tönnies' und Walter Jellineks, hatte Deutschland verlassen müssen. In Neuseeland wurde er einer der weltweit anerkanntesten Sozialwissenschaftler und ein Wegbereiter der modernen Demographie.

Felix Jacoby übte viele Jahre großen Einfluß auf die Klassische Philologie seiner Kieler Alma Mater aus und bewog zahlreiche herausragende Studenten, wenigstens vorübergehend nach Kiel zu wechseln. Die dortigen gemeinsamen Lehrveranstaltungen mit Eduard Fraenkel (Ende der 1920er Jahre) oder dem Philosophen Julius Stenzel sowie die intensiven,

auch nichtwissenschaftlichen Kontakte zwischen den akademischen Lehrern und der Studentenschaft – darunter das Theaterstück „Zukunfts-Philologie“ – haben in den Erinnerungen der Schüler einen bleibenden Eindruck hinterlassen.

Allerdings lagen ihm theoretische Diskussionen innerhalb seines Faches, wie sie mit der Historismuskritik der 20er Jahre aufkamen, nicht allzu sehr; damit war er, wenn man so will, „the most traditional of Wilamowitz' great Berlin students“ (W.M. Calder). Ihm ging es um konkrete Verbesserungsvorschläge für die Organisation des Studiums, sein Feld war die Praxis, nicht die Theorie. Felix Jacoby war dabei Repräsentant einer deutschen Gelehrtentradition mit ihren Wurzeln im wilhelminischen 19. Jahrhundert: „Weitgehend unpolitisch und diszipliniert in der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit, scharf im Urteil und hingebungsvoll bei der Unterstützung der Studenten“ (A. Wittram).

Was den Austausch mit den Kollegen vor Ort oder im Fach angeht, so fallen einerseits enge Freundschaften, andererseits aber auch dezidierte, nicht selten polemische Urteile auf. Diplomatie war Jacobys Sache nicht, „vielmehr zog er dieser die offene und von seiner Seite meist konstruktiv gemeinte Kritik vor“ (A. Wittram).

Nachdem Jacoby bereits 1908 in einer programmatischen Rede in Berlin sein Vorhaben, die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker zu publizieren, angekündigt hatte, veröffentlichte er ein Jahr später einen ausführlichen Text, in dem er die Entwicklung der griechischen Historiographie skizzierte und sein Arbeitsprogramm darlegte, an das er sich auch im großen und ganzen später hielt.

Prinzip seiner Auswahl und Reihung waren die historische Entwicklung der Geschichtsschreibung und die Ausrichtung der Werke (I. Genealogie und Mythographie; II. Universal- und Zeitgeschichte. Chronographie; III. Ethnographie und Horographie; IV. Antiquarische Geschichte und Biographie; V. Geographie; VI. Unbestimmbare Autoren. Theorie der Geschichtsschreibung). Der erste Band seiner Sammlung (FGrHist Nr. 1–63) erschien 1923 und enthielt als wichtigste Autoren den Geographen und Historiker Hekataios von Milet (1) sowie den Logographen Hellanikos von Lesbos (4).

Die Texte, unterteilt in *T(estimonia)*, d.h. Hinweise späterer Autoren auf die edierten Autoren, und *F(ragmente)*, nach dem Vorbild der Fragmente der Vorsokratiker des Lehrers Diels, besitzen alle einen textkritischen Apparat. Schon in diesem ersten Band ist Jacobys Methode zu beobachten, die Fragmente gleichsam synoptisch nebeneinander zu drucken, die von mehr als einem Autor zitiert werden. Der zweite Teil des monumentalen Werkes erschien bereits zwischen 1926 und 1930.

Als ihm die Nationalsozialisten ein Publikationsverbot auferlegten und „Nichtariern“ sogar den Besuch von öffentlichen Bibliotheken untersagten, die Weiterarbeit an den Fragmenten damit gleichsam unmöglich geworden war, bestärkte dies offensichtlich Jacoby in dem Wunsch, Deutschland zu verlassen. Als wie grundlegend seine Arbeit für die Altertumswissenschaften angesehen wurde, beweist ein Schreiben des „Dean and Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford“, der Jacoby mitteilte, man wünsche sich „to enable you to continue your important work on the fragments of the Greek historians as soon as possible here in Oxford where conditions seem to be particularly favourable for carrying on such an undertaking.“ Unter finanziell nicht eben günstigen Bedingungen arbeitete Felix Jacoby in Oxford weiter an den Fragmenten; nur selten sah man ihn außerhalb seines Colleges oder seiner Wohnung in St Margaret's Road.

Welchen Eindruck Jacoby auf seine Umgebung machte, verdeutlicht ein Zitat des Philologen Mortimer Chambers: „Jacoby was a man of immense inner strength, short of stature but a dynamo, and as determined as any Prussian general (a type that many people saw in him).“ In der Oxforder Zeit entstand auch der „massive crowning stone of the whole structure“ (M. Chambers), der als zweibändiges Supplement zu *FGrHist IIIb* angelegte Kommentar zur *Atthidographie* (der Athener Lokalgeschichtsschreibung) – „What a book!“ urteilte der berühmte englische Historiker Arnold W. Gomme.

Die Fragmente sind Jacobys Lebenswerk; nichts wird sich im Bereich der Forschungen zur antiken Geschichtsschreibung je mit ihm messen können.

Leider werden über diesem monumentalen Werk allzu oft Jacobys grundlegende Arbeiten zu anderen philologischen bzw. literarhistorischen Themen vergessen, so etwa die zu den römischen Elegikern. Diesbezüglich ist von Jacoby selbst der Satz überliefert: „Why do these people in Oxford think I'm a historian?“

Der große Schüler von Wilamowitz und Diels, der Freund von Eduard Norden und Julius Stenzel, schrieb einmal den Kindern seines Kieler Freundes: „es vergeht thatsächlich kaum ein tag, an dem ich mich nicht mit ihnen [Wilamowitz und Stenzel] unterhalte, und alle lebenden (...) treten völlig zurück; doch wohl weil jene beiden die einzigen sind (nicht waren), von denen ich mich innerlich immer von neuem gefördert fühle.“

Josef Wiesehöfer

Felix Jacoby – Wichtigste Werke

Monographien

Apollodors Chronik. Eine Sammlung der Fragmente, Berlin 1902 (ND New York 1973).

Das Marmor Parium herausgegeben und erklärt, Berlin 1904.

Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker. Teil I-Teil IIIC, Berlin/Leiden 1923–1958.

Hesiodi Carmina. Pars I. Theogonia, Berlin 1930.

Atthis. The Local Chronicles of Ancient Athens, Oxford 1940 (ND New York 1973).

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Griechische Historiker, Stuttgart 1956.

Abhandlungen zur griechischen Geschichtsschreibung, ed. H. Bloch, Leiden 1956.

Kleine philologische Schriften, hg. v. H. J. Mette, 2 Bde., Berlin 1961.

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Navicula Chiloniensis. Studia Philologa Felici Jacoby Professori Chiloniensi emerito octogenario oblata, Leiden 1956.

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C. Ampolo (ed.), *Aspetti dell'opera di Felix Jacoby*, Pisa 2009.

M. Chambers, „Felix Jacoby“, in: W. W. Briggs/W. M. Calder III (eds.), *Classical Scholarship. A Biographical Encyclopedia*, New York/London 1990, 205–210 (Zitate: S. 205, 208).

M. Chambers, „The Genesis of Jacoby's *Atthis*“, in: E. M. Craik (ed.), *Owls to Athens. Essays on Classical Subjects for Sir K. Dover*, Oxford 1990, 281–290.

- A. Wittram, *Fragmenta. Felix Jacoby und Kiel* (Kieler Werkstücke, A 28), Frankfurt a.M. 2004 (Zitate: S. 43, 55, 105 f., 155 f.).
- I. Worthington, „Jacoby, Felix (1876–1959)“, in: R. S. Bagnall et al. (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, Chichester 2013, vii. 3564–5.

James Howard-Johnston – Zum Autor

James Howard-Johnston, der am 12. März 1942 geboren wurde und in Oxford u. a. Schüler von Peter Brown war, darf als einer der besten Kenner der Geschichte der Spätantike und der oströmisch-byzantinischen Welt zwischen ca. 400 und 1200 n. Chr. gelten.

Als Emeritus Fellow des Corpus Christi College der Universität Oxford und von 1971 bis zu seiner Emeritierung 2009 als Lecturer in Byzantine Studies hat er sich dabei in Forschung und Lehre nicht auf Konstantinopel und seine Institutionen-, Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Militärgeschichte beschränkt, sondern sich auch intensiv mit den diplomatischen und unfriedlichen Beziehungen zwischen Ostrom/Byzanz und seinen iranischen, armenischen, hunnisch-türkischen, bulgarischen und arabischen Nachbarn sowie mit den Umwälzungen im östlichen Mittelmeerraum und in Vorderasien im 7. Jahrhundert beschäftigt.

Dass dies alles nicht ohne die stupende Kenntnis der zeitgenössischen vielsprachigen Historiographie und historischen Tradition dieser Räume möglich war, scheint sich von selbst zu verstehen, war aber lange Zeit, nicht zuletzt wegen eben der Vielfalt des Materials und der den zahlreichen Zeugnissen je eigenen Entstehungsbedingungen, Wirkabsichten und Weltansichten, nicht selbstverständlich. Der Umstand, dass James Howard-Johnston sich um eine Gesamtschau und -analyse des historiographischen Materials zum 7. Jahrhundert bemüht hat und damit Jacobys Spuren gefolgt ist, hat ihn im Jahre 2012 zum geeigneten Festredner gemacht.

Aus der Reihe seiner zahlreichen Veröffentlichungen ragt in letzter Zeit, neben der Aufsatzsammlung *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity* von 2006 und der zusammen mit Robert W. Thomson, betreuten ausführlich kommentierten Edition des historiographisch überaus bedeutsamen armenischen Geschichtswerkes des Pseudo-Sebeos aus dem 7. Jahrhundert (1999), vor allem ein Buch heraus, das seinen Autor als einen der innovativsten Historiker der Zeit der frühen muslimischen Expansion und seiner nahöstlichen Vorgeschichte

ausweist: *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, erschienen im Jahre 2010. Es lässt, auf der Grundlage intensiven quellenkritischen Studiums, die Leser einen ganz neuen Blick auf Kontinuitäten und Brüche zwischen der vorislamischen und islamischen Zeit Eurasiens werfen, den üblicherweise durch Disziplinengrenzen und eigene Interessen begrenzten zeitlichen und räumlichen Horizont überschreiten sowie eine Fülle neuer Einsichten und intellektueller und wissenschaftlicher Anregungen gewinnen. Eine aktuelle Darstellung des letzten großen Krieges der Spätantike (zwischen Ostrom und dem Sasanidenreich) befindet sich darüber hinaus im Druck.

Dass der Autor auch wissenschaftliche und politisch-kulturelle Interessen auf spannende und vergnügliche Art und Weise zu verbinden versteht, beweist sein zusammen mit Nigel Ryan verfasster Reisebericht *The Scholar and the Gypsy* von 1992, dessen Lektüre man ebenfalls nur jedem ans Herz legen kann.

Seine hier vorgelegte Darstellung der frühbyzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung wird zweifelsohne viele geneigte und interessierte Leser finden und zum Weiterdenken und -arbeiten anregen.

Josef Wiesehöfer